AFFILIATE MEMBERS

(a) Report of the Chairman

Note by the Secretary-General

In this document, the Chairman of the Affiliate Members report on the activities carried out by the Committee of Affiliate Members since the seventy-fourth session of the Executive Council.
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I - OVERVIEW OF WORLD EVENTS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SESSION

General situation

The sector has continued to develop favourably during the first half of 2005, following a trend very similar to that observed in 2004, with growth in both the number of passengers and volume of receipts, despite high energy prices, instability in currency exchange rates, and increased competition deriving from growing use of the Internet on the part of consumers, as well as the availability on the market of new transport and accommodation options, a situation that, on the whole, offers more travel and tourism opportunities for consumers.

The instability of exchange rates and high energy prices will continue to weigh on the markets throughout this year.

The worst natural disaster in the history of tourism

A few weeks after the Executive Council session in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, a tsunami of enormous magnitude struck various areas of several countries on the Indian Ocean, as well as on the African coast. The tragedy of 26 December 2004 was the worst catastrophe in the history of tourism. It claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people of many different nationalities, provoking the grief and compassion of everyone and uniting governments and the tourism industry of the entire world in solidarity.

The Industry Leaders Forum organized by the Business Council at the ICC in Berlin on 10 March 2005 prior to the ITB was held immediately following the meeting of the Technical Committee for the Tsunami of the WTO Emergency Task Force, at which donor institutions and governments reported on the effects of the disaster in terms of both human and material losses in their respective countries and areas of activity, and on the actions carried out to date aimed at restoring the quality of life that existed in the affected areas prior to the disaster.

The Forum was presided by Dr. Ralf Corsten, and was attended by 84 persons: members of the sector, experts, ministers, authorities, and senior officials of 32 countries, thus demonstrating that, as pointed out by the WTO Secretary-General, the sector and the governments of the world were putting aside competition and were uniting to deal with the disaster and resolve the problems it created.
The Forum concluded that although more tourism meant more profits, which generates more employment, the present situation was that the tourism supply had not yet been rehabilitated in certain areas and that the full recovery of such supply was the immediate objective. Recovery needed to be accelerated and to this end, small local entrepreneurs could avail of effective assistance in the form of microcredits which they could use to rebuild their small businesses located in remote places far away from the more highly developed banking and administrative networks geared toward larger enterprises.

The media coverage of the tsunami was broad and commensurate to the effects of the disaster, which took a high toll in terms of both human lives and material losses. However, the effects of this wide publicity now have to be counteracted through cooperation among all sectors to encourage and restore confidence among consumers, by convincing them that the safety, health, sanitation and services at the affected destinations were back to their pre-tsunami levels, and that the local populations affected are once again ready to engage in tourism business activity.

An early-warning system is needed to provide peace of mind among potential tourists, who need to feel safe once again. Cooperation among governments as well as between the industry with the governments will make it possible to soon implement an effective tsunami early-warning system in the region.

A communication campaign should prevent religious and social prejudices from hampering the process of tourism recovery in the affected areas.

Although pricing policies can stimulate the recovery of travel to the area in certain cases, the most effective course of action is to combine any singular actions by the industry with public promotion at international meetings, conferences, congresses, and other events to promote the image that the destination is fully recovering for tourism. Other temporary technical solutions could include government guarantees of a minimum profit margin in air transport operations to the area, in order to ensure regular air service to the affected destinations until prior tourism levels are once again reached.

Reconstruction should observe sustainability criteria, taking into account not only humanitarian aspects but also environmental considerations relative to coastal erosion, water quality, and the replanting of autochthonous flora whenever possible.

Tourism workers in the affected areas should benefit from human resources training programmes offered by their own chains or business federations, with priority over workers from other areas, and governments should provide everything necessary for the mobility and travel documentation of such persons who need to travel to training centres away from the affected localities for the duration of the training.
II. NEW ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE OF AFFILIATE MEMBERS IN RELATION TO ITS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

II.1 Conferences, forums and seminars

a) Organization of a WTO seminar on "Congestion Management at Successful Destinations", in cooperation with Affiliate Member FITUR on 27 January 2005 in Madrid, Spain, which was attended by 198 participants from 41 countries. There were eleven speakers at the seminar, which was presided by Secretary-General and by the Tourism Director of the European Commission DG Enterprise, Pedro Ortún.

b) Immediately after the 2nd meeting of the WTO Emergency Task Force for Tsunami Recovery, the Business Council of the Affiliate Members held an Industry Leaders Forum in Berlin, Germany, on 12 March. The summary of the conclusions of this Forum can be consulted on the WTO website (Affiliate Members section). Seventy-seven persons from 32 countries took part in the Forum, including ministers, chief executives, experts, and senior government officials, many of whom were Affiliate Members. The Forum underlined the effectiveness of public-private cooperation with regard to the recovery needs of the tsunami-affected destinations.

c) The Fourth meeting of the Task Force on Destination Management took place at Berlin on 12 March, during the ITB, presided by its Chairman, Mr. Michael Refalo, Former Minister of Tourism of Malta, High Commissioner of Malta to the United Kingdom and Chairman of the WTO Task Force for Destination Management.

d) Seminar on congestion management, improving visitor experience and safeguarding tourism destinations, held in Berlin on 12 March 2005 during the ITB fair, which drew 98 participants from 34 countries. There were eight speakers at the seminar, which was presided by Secretary-General and by the Tourism Director of the European Commission DG Enterprise, Pedro Ortún.

The presentations given at the WTOBC seminars have been distributed to the participants and will shortly be available at www.world-tourism.org, in line with the wishes of the Business Council, which spearheads the dissemination of know-how, experience and knowledge in the sector.

e) A Forum on Urban Tourism will analyse the challenges of urban tourism in Istanbul, Turkey, on 1-3 June 2005, and will also tackle the management of cultural sites and the growing importance of business tourism and themed tourism in cities, among other important issues in tourism.
II. 2 Development of Information and Communication Technologies

a) Dissemination of the impact of the application of new technologies on the tourism sector and of practical guidelines.

The third WTO seminar on "Technology and new trends in tourism" will take place in Bogotá, Colombia on 19-20 May 2005, organized in cooperation with the Colombian Hotel Association (COTELCO), an Affiliate Member.

b) Finalization of guidelines and tools for improving the application and development of e-business in the tourism sector.

The study on a benchmarking system for destination websites aimed at consumers in ongoing, in cooperation with IFITT. It is expected that this study can be published in 2005.

c) A list of services available to businesses, national tourism organizations and other organizations in the area of information and communication technologies and on e-tourism, as a detachable part of the aforementioned publication could be available for access shortly and will facilitate international cooperation in digital matters in the tourism sector.

d) The collaboration with the Harmo-Ten project continues, aimed at the inter-operative harmonization of digital platforms for information exchange without the need to modify the format of existing messages in each of them.

III. PUBLICATIONS

WTO Tourism Policy Forum - the Proceedings of this successful October 2004 conference in Washington, DC of international donor agencies, developing countries and civil society have been submitted for publication by late 2005. These Proceedings will contain 40 speeches, presentations and papers on harnessing the economic power of tourism for sustainable development.

IV. RESEARCH STUDIES

IV. 1 Tourism Congestion Management at Natural and Cultural Sites "

In 2005, the Business Council, in collaboration with the Sustainable Development of Tourism Department, published in English, Spanish and French this study, which provides concrete guidelines regarding congestion management issues at natural and cultural sites, as well as important historical quarters of cities, national parks and natural sites the merit protection. This study, which contains ten studies of actual cases, had been widely demanded by destination management and marketing organizations, and by members of the Business Council.
IV.2 Study on the Meetings Industry

The Business Council of the Affiliate Members is preparing, with the sponsorship and collaboration of Affiliate Members STCRC, Reed Exhibitions, ICCA, MPI (Meetings Professional International), and other leading members of the Council, a study on meetings tourism understood to include traditional activities such as business travel, meetings, incentives, congresses and fairs, as well as newer categories such as large sporting events, and major expositions, which will be completed in 2005.

IV.3. Study on consumer trends in the marketplace

The analysis of the behavioural patterns of tourism consumers in a market that is undergoing constant demographic, technological and economic change, as well as changes in tastes and preferences, is of common interest to all companies in the sector, and it should soon be possible to proceed with the formulation of the objective and the sources of funding of this study.

IV.4. Research support of the Education Council

Research support – grants were made to the Dublin Institute of Technology, the University of Calgary and the University of Brighton to help fund research projects to improve destination management and related activities; project findings and recommendations will be posted on the Education Council website.

V. OTHER PROJECTS AND MAJOR CONCERNS

The Secretariat of the Affiliate Members is working on seminar projects with members of the Business Council in Belarus, Chile, and Brazil.

The Secretariat of the Affiliate members is working on the preparation of a seminar on "Gastronomy as a part of cultural heritage", which will be held in the latter part of September 2005 in Brazil, and on the "Seminar on transport and border traffic issues" in the latter part of October, which could take place at the same time as the World Tourism Forum, the large ABAV fair, and a regional meeting of Affiliate Members of the Americas.

TedQual Volunteers Program - the Education Council launched this new initiative that enlists TedQual education institutions in providing technical assistance to developing countries in carrying out sustainable tourism development projects; sites in Central and South America and the Pacific have been targeted for this assistance.

TedProm - this program is scheduled to be launched in April to inform potential students throughout the world of the best higher education and training programs available to prepare them for rewarding tourism careers; instruments include an improved Worldwide Web presence, high-impact directories and brochures.
VI. PARTICIPATION OF THE WTO COMMITTEE OF AFFILIATE MEMBERS AND OF THE COUNCILS IN OTHER CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, PRESENTATIONS AND MEETINGS

- Lecture on "The industry at the threshold of 2005" at the workshop "Tourism market trends and the development of new products", organized by the Greek National Tourism Organization during Philoxenia 2004, Thessaloniki, Greece, 5-8 November 2004

- Lecture "Current situation and trends in tourism demand" at the First International Technotourism Forum organized by the Government of the Balearic Islands, Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 17-19 November 2004

- Participation in the Seventh Meeting of the United Nations Information and Communication technologies Task Force, Berlin, Germany, 19-20 November 2004

- Participation in the World Tourism Forum, Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, 1-3 December 2004

- Participation in the meeting on the business travel sector (WTO/MPI, Reed Exhibitions, ICCA), Barcelona, Spain, 29 November 2004

- Attendance at the EIBTM Tourism Fair of Barcelona, 30 November 2004

- Lecture "The Diversity of World Tourism" in the lecture series on "Tourism as an Economic Sector", organized by the Real Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de Gran Canaria and the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, 20 January 2005

- Participation in the IFITT (International Federation of Information, and Travel and Tourism Technologies) meeting, 24-26 January 2005, Innsbruck, Austria


- Third meeting of the Board of Directors of the WTO Business Council, FITUR, Madrid, 27 January 2005

- Fifteenth meeting of the Board of the Affiliate Members, Madrid, 28 January 2005
- Participation in the second meeting of the Emergency Task Force on the consequences of the tsunami for the tourism sector, organized by the Regional Representation for Asia, ITB, Berlin, Germany, 10 March 2005

- Industry Leaders Forum organized by the Business Council, ITB Berlin, Germany, 10 March 2005

- Participation in the HarmoTen meeting, second meeting of the consortium, Pisa, Italy, 7-8 February 2005

- Lecture "Is tourism still in vogue?" at the Master's Programme in Tourism and Communication, organized by the Universad de Málaga, Málaga, Spain, 1-3 March 2005

- Lecture "Cooperate to win" at the WTO seminar on public-private cooperation, organized by the Regional Representation for Europe and the Business Council, in conjunction with the Russian Federal Tourism Agency, Moscow, Russian Federation, 22 March 2005

- Lecture, "What will tomorrow's tourism be like?" Abaw/Feria Multiminhas seminar, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 1-2 April 2005

- Workshop on the meetings industry in the tourism satellite account, Monaco, 9 April 2005

- MPI meeting on Meetings Tourism, Monaco, 10 April 2005

- Fourth Investgolf Forum 2005, Belek, Antalya, organized by the Ministry of Culture of Turkey, 22-24 April 2005

- News conference and third coordinated meeting of the HarmoTen Project, London, United Kingdom, 10-11 May 2005

- Business Council seminar on "Current tourism trends in the world: Information, promotion, technologies, signposting and profitability", to be held jointly with the Colombian Hotel Association (COTELCO), on 19-20 May 2005.

- Annual Meeting – the Education Council will hold its annual meeting at WTO headquarters, May 30-31 to assess progress toward objectives and plan for future programs in support of WTO's policies and initiatives.