MINUTES OF THE
FORTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE UNWTO
COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS
AND
CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR
ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GROWTH:
CHALLENGES, THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

San Salvador (El Salvador) 21-22 June 2007

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MINUTES OF THE FORTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE UNWTO REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS

I

1. On 22 June 2007, the Regional Commission for the Americas held its forty-sixth meeting in the city of San Salvador (El Salvador), with the Minister of Tourism of Brazil, Ms. Marta Suplicy, in the chair. The Representatives of 17 member States, one Affiliate Member, two international organizations, and a special guest, took part in the meeting. The list of participants is provided in Annex 1.

2. The meeting began with adoption of the following agenda:

   1) Communication of the Chairman (Brazil)
   2) Preliminary remarks by the Secretary-General
   3) Tourism trends in the Americas
   4) Draft general programme of work for 2008-2009
   5) Application of the general programme of work for 2006-2007
   6) Election of the Representatives for the Committee of the Global Code of Ethics
   7) Structure of the 17th Session of the General Assembly
   8) Risk assessment and management – Avian Flu Preparedness
   9) World Tourism Day 2008
   10) Other matters
   11) Venue and dates of the forty-seventh meeting of the Commission

II

3. In her Communication to the Commission, the Minister of Tourism of Brazil expressed appreciation on the behalf of all of the delegations for the cordial welcome received from El Salvador and its Minister of Tourism, Mr. Rubén Roche. She then outlined the basic issues on the UNWTO world agenda, concerning ways in which tourism can help to combat poverty and promote sustainable development. She noted the close relationship between poverty reduction and tourism, inasmuch as increased income for disadvantaged population segments can help to drive domestic tourism. She observed that measures taken to facilitate social tourism, and the improvements spurred by increased tourism in transport, basic sanitation systems, education, etc., can help to reduce social and economic disparities and improve living conditions.

4. She stressed the need to integrate the concept of sustainability in tourism-related efforts to promote environmental and cultural conservation and social inclusion, reiterating Brazil's proposal to make "sustainability and social inclusion" the theme for World Tourism Day in 2008 and 2009.
5. The Chair of the Commission concluded by emphasizing the importance of cooperation in promoting destinations, citing as an example the agreement among MERCOSUR member countries to finance an office in Japan. She suggested that this experience might be replicated throughout the Americas with UNWTO support.

III

6. The Secretary-General of UNWTO presented his Preliminary Remarks, as contained in document CAM/46/3, describing the situation of international tourism and the life of the Organization, which were received without comment. With respect to the situation of tourism, he stated that the results for 2006 represented the continuation of a period of historic growth in world tourism beginning in 2004 (20% cumulative, i.e. 150 million additional visitors), but that the 4% growth projected for 2007 would be the start of a "landing phase" in the long term growth curve, with the world tourism sector now entering a new period of more moderate, solid and responsible growth.

7. Referring to UNWTO itself, the Secretary-General noted the Secretariat's reorganization into new departments and streamlined programme of activities.

IV

8. The third agenda item was introduced by the UNWTO Regional Representative for the Americas, who presented data from Tourism Market Trends 2006 and in particular from UNWTO World Tourism Barometer of June 2007. These included growth of 4.9% in world tourism during the period January-April 2007. The Americas, with a rate of 2.1%, was the world's slowest growing region, albeit with significant variations between subregions: Central and South America both reported rates above 8%.

9. The overall trend notwithstanding, the region accounted for a 21% market share in terms of international tourism income, five percentage points higher than its share of arrivals, testifying to the region's capacity to attract tourists with high spending levels, especially in North America.

10. The presentation led to an interesting discussion on the indicators used to evaluate world tourism performance. The Secretary of Tourism of Mexico said that the indicators and figures used by UNWTO, in terms of international arrivals and income, did not permit proper assessments of the sustainability of tourism, and could encourage senseless competition among countries, especially developing countries.
11. He said that it was becoming necessary to find new indicators, measuring what is best for a country in terms of sustainability, quality, employment, investment, local dividends, etc. He suggested use of the term "travellers", generally associated with greater benefits to the local economy, rather than "tourists". He suggested the need for a forum in which to discuss these matters and offered to host a seminar/workshop on the issue in Mexico.

12. The Chair of the Commission fully shared the opinion expressed by Mexico, including the points that it is preferable to have fewer tourists generating more income, that there should be indicators for "well-being", and that traveller is the preferred term. The Secretary of State for Tourism of Honduras also agreed with the comments from Mexico. He suggested the development of case studies in countries like the Cayman Islands. The Minister of Tourism of El Salvador seconded the motion by Mexico, citing the example of UNDP with its "Human Development Indicators". The Minister of Tourism of Paraguay called attention to a communication problem and said that UNWTO should conduct a campaign among leaders on the importance of tourism and the need to measure it and its effects.

13. Nicaragua said that 30% of its tourist arrivals corresponded to visits by nationals residing abroad, for which it did not have to compete, and that this had had an impact on the results obtained. That type of situation needs to be considered when measuring tourism and its effects. On the other hand, he said better conditions and facilities should be created to encourage visits by these nationals.

14. The Regional Representative pointed out that difficulties in obtaining statistics had impeded the development of other indicators, but that development of the Tourism Satellite Account could at least be useful in ascertaining the economic effects of tourism on the national economy.

15. The Secretary-General said that UNWTO was fully aware that the two categories of indicators used (arrivals and income) were not entirely satisfactory. For this very reason, the recently created UNWTO Centre of Excellence in Montréal would be addressing the issue of developing new indicators for performance and excellence in the areas of sustainability, local economic impact, the non-economic elements included in the Global Code of Ethics, destination management, the effectiveness of promotional campaigns at the destination level, etc. He recalled that at its last meeting, the UNWTO Executive Council had approved this course of action and that UNWTO was now in the process of selecting a number of pilot countries at the destination level, including Canada, Mexico, Spain, France, Monaco, China, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. In that connection, he thanked Mexico for its offer to serve as one the pilot cases for analysis.
16. The Secretary of Tourism of Mexico confirmed this interest and suggested that the UNDP Human Development Report could be enriched with a chapter on tourism and travel. The Secretary-General acknowledged the publication's importance and value but said he was not entirely satisfied with it, given the failure to include indicators on tourism despite repeated efforts by the UNWTO Secretariat to have them taken into consideration. The representative of the Netherlands cooperation agency SNV cited cases in which social development indicators were used jointly with other institutions and could be made available to the countries on request.

17. The delegation of Mexico said it had problems with the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, published by the World Economic Forum, in Davos. He criticized it for only taking into account the "business lobby", leading to results like the following: even though the Sun and Beach segment dominates world tourism, Switzerland received the best rating, with UNWTO's endorsement. The Secretary-General of UNWTO pointed out that the Secretariat was not satisfied with the report either, given the methodology on which it was based. The surveys conducted by the authors of the report only took into account the business sector, and UNWTO was trying to distance itself from the report. These clarifications were very well received by Mexico.

18. The National Director of the National Tourism Service of Chile asked about the reasons for the good performance in South America and whether the Commission would issue any message about the requirement in the United States for US citizens to obtain passports for travel to Mexico, Canada, and the Caribbean. The Regional Representative for the Americas reviewed some of the factors highlighted in the Barometer, and indicated that the United States had extended the deadline for obtaining passports.

19. The Chair of the Commission supported the Mexican proposal to look for new indicators to ensure that the fight against poverty, for example, will be reflected. Discussion concluded with consensus among the Commission Members that UNWTO should develop new indicators better adapted to reflect sustainability, quality, and management in the countries and destinations, as well as support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to add indicators for sustainable development, which had been in preparation for years through the intermediary of the Centre of Excellence in Montréal. The Centre will conduct a pilot study in which about 10 countries, including Canada and Mexico, are already involved.

20. The Deputy Secretary-General reported on the draft general programme of work for 2006-2007, contained in document CAM/46/6. He noted that it differed from earlier programmes in that it was based on a strategic approach to four major objectives, concentrating UNWTO activity in a reduced number of activities—those most urgently needed and of greatest interest to the Members. All of this had been favourably recognized and approved by the UNWTO Executive Council.
21. He also noted, however, that UNWTO had not been able to establish priorities suggested by member States because only 31 (of the 150) Full Members had responded to the survey conducted for use in preparing the programme of work more than a year earlier. He noted as well that the programme only reflect the "regular budget" and did not include the full range of activities of being conducted with extra-budgetary resources within the framework of the ST-EP initiative, in partnership with UNDP, SNV, the Republic of Korea, Italy, and other donors.

22. He indicated that ST-EP only had about US$ 8 million and that UNWTO was looking for more donors. He observed that another important characteristic of the program was that for the first time 55% of the budget was going to activities and not current expenses. He said that the Regional Representations would have the budgetary allocations needed to conduct activities in pursuit of the region's specific priorities.

23. The floor then passed to the UNDP Resident Representative and Resident Coordinator for the United Nations System in El Salvador, who reported on the creation and operation of the UNDP Fund set up by Spain in the amount of €528 million for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. He said the fund had financing available for projects in the tourism sector. He stressed that national tourism authorities should contact the UNDP Offices in their respective countries to learn more about the process and apply for support. He indicated that he also could help in identifying agencies they would like to work with in presenting projects in thematic areas most relevant to the sector, such as culture and development, democratic governance, economic governance, and climate change. He said that proposals of significant size were expected, several times over the $8 million, with execution periods of two to four years involving two or more agencies within the country's United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

24. The Representative of Mexico commended the Secretary-General for the new method used in preparing the draft general programme of work for 2008-2009, which he considered simpler and a basis for strengthening UNWTO activities. While acknowledging progress with the programme of work, he also saw room for continuing improvement in internal coordination within the Secretariat. He said the programme did not give enough visibility to or sufficiently heighten awareness about the importance of tourism. He noted the lack of specific activities planned for the development of products, an area he said was of great interest to the American countries. He said that consistent with its position vis-à-vis all of the international organizations, Mexico was not prepared to accept an increase in its contribution.

25. The Regional Representative pointed out that the document was still open to amendments and that proposals and comments in this regard would be welcome.
26. The Regional Representative reported on the application of the general programme of work for 2006-2007, contained in documents CAM/46/5 and CAM/46/5/Add.1, indicating the activities conducted by the programme departments and Regional Representations. Special mention was made of the activities conducted by the Regional Representation for the Americas, and in particular the efforts made in the region with respect to tourism, air transport, the tourism satellite account, institutional strengthening, marketing, and support for micro-enterprise and SMEs.

27. The Representative of Ecuador said that a study on tourism and travel had been presented at a meeting in Porto Alegre (Brazil) and that the Andean Community was interested in conducting a similar study. The Representative of Brazil noted that the study presented in Porto Alegre had been prepared by his country and offered to make it available to all of the Commission's member countries. The Regional Representative for the Americas observed that UNWTO had already conducted studies on tourism and air transport for Mexico, Paraguay, Argentina and Central America and that the Andean Community should formalize a specific request in this regard.

28. Mexico said it was necessary to work on early indicators, taking a more forward-looking perspective on tourism. The Regional Representative responded that work on such indicators was planned with Galileo and Amadeus. The Secretary-General observed that UNWTO had had good working experience with VISA and was soliciting help from other credit cards in getting the information needed to develop early indicators.

29. For the election of the representatives for the Committee of the Global Code of Ethics for the period 2008-2011, the Secretariat presented document CAM/46/7, outlining the qualifications of the three candidatures received from Argentina, Costa Rica, and Venezuela.

30. Asked by the Secretariat to reconfirm these candidatures, the delegate of Argentina reconfirmed the candidature of Mr. Carlos Gutiérrez, with support from Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. The delegate of Costa Rica reconfirmed the candidature of Mr. Hermes Navarro, with support from Mexico and El Salvador. In view of these developments—the Deputy Secretary-General having also observed that Venezuela was not present and was thus unable to express support for its candidate—the Chair of the Committee, as proposed by Mexico and agreed by consensus, proclaimed that the Argentine and Costa Rican candidates had been elected as the region's representatives on the Committee of the Global Code of Ethics for the period to 2008-2011, alternating as Full Member and Alternate, for equal periods of two years, starting with Argentina as the Full Member.
31. The Commission received without comment two reports: CAM/46/8, on the structure of the 17th session of the General Assembly; and CAM/46/9, on Risk Assessment and Management - Avian Flu Preparedness.

32. Discussion on World Tourism Day (WTD) 2008 began with the presentation of document CAM/46/10, describing how the celebration of WTD had evolved over the years and recalling the themes selected for each year. It was explained that on the basis of geographical rotation, this major event would be celebrated in 2008 in the Americas and that Mexico was a candidate to serve as venue, as proposed in an official letter from the Secretary of Tourism of Mexico, contained in an annex to the above-cited document.

33. The Representative of Peru officially informed the Commission of his country's interest in hosting International Tourism Day in 2008, owing to the importance his government attached to sustainable tourism development and because of a series of diverse events planned in that year in Peru.

34. The Chair of the Commission suggested that CAM countries take advantage of the event to engage in mutual promotion.

35. The forty-seventh meeting of the UNWTO Commission for the Americas will be held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, on Monday, 26 November, within the framework of the 17th Session of the UNWTO General Assembly.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1) Security and growth in the tourism sector

The experience of El Salvador, "Tourism Safety and Security", shows how security can be a potent element in promoting a destination and strengthening a country's brand.

- Tourism safety and security requires the adoption of a system of technical and administrative processes (prevention, quality of service, institutional strength, quality and transparency of information, crisis management) given the complex and crosscutting nature of tourism activity.
- The system requires strong institutional coordination and the active cooperation of private agents.
- The tourism security system should address all areas that directly or indirectly affect the physical integrity and health of the tourists, including law enforcement, justice, land use, health, and tourist assistance.
- Law enforcement is a particularly key area and point of departure.
- NTA leadership, political support at the highest level, close institutional coordination, and the participation of citizens and local authorities are essential conditions for the system.
- From the standpoint of the NTA, the tourism security system can serve a coordinating function in collaboration with other institutions (El Salvador), or can assume direct political responsibility for the activity (Dominican Republic).
- There is a direct correlation between increased security and the liberation of tourism potential. Security also produces positive social externalities.

2) Professionalizing management

As demonstrated in the case of Argentina, the growing economic weight of tourism calls for a leap forward in professionalizing managerial capacity for this market, from the standpoint of human resources working in the tourism sector as well as the modernization of laws and regulations governing the sector.

Four areas can be highlighted:
• Promotion
• Planning
• Legislation
• Human resource training

This lays out the framework for improving competitiveness and accessibility in the sector. This is how tourism can contribute to sustainable development, particularly in terms of benefits for future generations.

3) Positioning and marketing in a changing, globalized environment

The case of Canada underscores the need for consistency between a country's values and the characteristics of its country-brand:

• Emphasize the relevance of the destination.
• Distinguish it from other destinations.
• Present it in a manner consistent with the destination promoted.

The condition sine qua non for a successful policy is research on generating markets, competing markets, and the demands and requirements associated with specific demands segments (real and potential clients).

Specialization poses a major challenge in the emerging tourism segments. The tourist experience has to be approached in terms of the individual consumer, to create, strengthen, and consolidate the emerging segments.

The creative platform for the brand was based on the attributes clients associate with Canada as a destination.

Colombia conducted a similar process in defining its own country brand. The brand had to be designed so as to help overcome an existing negative image. The distinguishing characteristic of Colombia is its people and their way of life. This led to identifying Colombia with "passion".

Taking the example of Uruguay, the seminar looked at two emerging segments:

• Nationals residing abroad.
• Cruise tourism.
Nationals residing abroad now represent an opportunity given their weight within national economies. Their remittances in many cases exceed foreign direct investment and bilateral and multilateral development programs. They also interject a profound human dimension.

For some countries they represent the main generating market and are the focus of promotional activities abroad. These activities have institutional platforms for the identification of needs within the migrant market.

The cruise segment is on the rise but is approached in different ways depending on the country, ranging from apprehension to acceptance. This activity needs to be better understood in order to evaluate its potential in respect of specific destinations.

It is an activity that is evolving rapidly on the basis of sound market segmentation and specialization. These characteristics have attracted a wide and growing range of clients. Destinations need to know their potential client base in developing cruise activity, and it is imperative to diversify itineraries in order to optimize profits.

4) Conditions required for sustainable tourism development in the essential three categories: economic, social, and environmental

In the case of the Dominican Republic, the destinations are managed with a close eye to their overall competitiveness, which requires comprehensive vision and planning. They have been realized with private-sector participation in coordination with and involving other government agencies. On this basis, policies have been formulated, objectives established, and financial resources mobilized to expand and improve infrastructure, conduct well-designed and properly implemented promotion campaigns, provide human resource training where needed, make rational use of natural resources, and take other aspects into account as required to protect the country’s social and cultural values.

There was general agreement on the need to:

- Apply the full range of best practices in the tourism sector.
- Mobilize tourism resources and assets

The close correlation between security and tourism exemplifies the importance of understanding tourism as a crosscutting activity, entailing institutional as well as economic dimensions.
The challenge is to:

i) Generate effective inter-institutional cooperation, particularly in the fields of justice and health, given their direct relationship with tourism activity. This means clearly delineating the areas of public authority that often overlap in the tourism sector.

ii) Strike the right balance among the various areas subject to government authority, failing which agencies may tend to compete for jurisdiction as well as resources.

In practice, increased governmental responsibility should go hand-in-hand with active private-sector involvement in the day-to-day application of tourism policies.
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