MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE WTO COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS

and

CONCLUSIONS OF THE SEMINAR ON TOURISM AND CULTURE: PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION

Salvador de Bahía (Brazil) 23-24 June 1999

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MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-FOURTH MEETING
OF THE WTO COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS

The events relative to the thirty-fourth meeting of the WTO Commission for the Americas took place in Salvador de Bahia (Brazil) on 23 June and were presided over by Dr. Caio Luiz de Carvalho, President of Embratur - Brazil, by the Chairman of the Regional Commission, Mr. Óscar Espinosa Villarreal, Secretary for Tourism of Mexico, by two of the Vice-Chairmen of the Regional Commission, Dr. Benito Stern, Minister of Tourism of Uruguay and Mrs. Marité López López, Director of the Tourism Office of Cuba for Spain and Portugal.

The complete list of participants is annexed to this document.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Commission adopted the following agenda without modifications:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Communication of the Chairman of the Commission (Mexico)
3. Preliminary remarks by the Secretary-General
4. Presentation of the statistical monograph for the region
5. Application to the region of the general programme of work for 1998-1999 and other activities
6. Cooperation between the Minister of Tourism of Mexico, VISA International and WTO Secretariat for the implementation of training programmes in the Americas region
7. Presentation of the revised WTO Report on Tourism Legislation in the Americas region
8. Results of the World Conference on the measurement of the economic impact of tourism, including WTO Tourism Satellite Account
9. Global Code of Ethics for Tourism: ideas and guidelines
11. Preparations for the thirteenth session of the General Assembly of the Organization (Santiago de Chile, 24 September - 1 October 1999)
12. Place and date of the thirty-fifth meeting of the Commission
2. Communication of the Chairman of the Commission

The Secretary for Tourism of Mexico began his speech by thanking the authorities of Brazil for their splendid reception and for the facilities provided for the work conducted at the CAM meeting and the seminar on tourism and culture; product development and promotion.

He also took this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Regional Commission, to the Secretary for Tourism of Argentina, Francisco Mayorga, both for his work in this capacity in the last ten years -making him the doyen of the Ministers of Tourism of the region- and for the Argentinean government’s consistently firm support of the Organization during these years.

During his intervention, Mr. Espinosa emphasized the need for the work conducted by the Commission to translate into specific goals and practical applicability.

Likewise, the Chairman of the Commission once again called for the agendas of the various international bodies which develop similar tasks in the region to be brought into line with a view to maximizing results and turning to better account the budgets which are already reduced in themselves.

In his intervention, he reiterated the need to give priority to sustainability in the tourism policies of the countries of the region, not only as a development factor, but also because sustainability, with each day that passes, is becoming an increasingly stronger market demand. More particularly, he highlighted the need to consider not only the environmental facet, but also the returns on investments and the participation of local communities in the spin-offs of tourism.

Given the relevance of sustainability as a tool for lending force to arguments which highlight the importance of the tourism sector, the Chairman asked the Member Countries of the region to strengthen the work they are doing with a view to implementing the Tourism Satellite Account.

On reflecting on the diversity of the strategic and tactical approaches to promotion, he proposed organizing a seminar which would enable the countries to share their experiences in this field, experiences such as those of the Canadian Tourism Commission or the Mexican Council for Tourism Promotion.

The Members of the Commission then proceeded to make the following points:

Uruguay, as an essential part of the CAM agenda, Minister Benito Stern referred to the work conducted by the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) and distributed the document entitled “The Free Trade Treaties and their effects on Tourism”, drafted by the LAIA.

Peru, the National Director of Tourism, María del Rocio Vesga Gatti, reported that this country will chair the Andean Community as of 30 May.
The Members of the Commission reiterated their interest in Canada resuming membership of WTO.

Finally, the President of Embratur and host of the meetings paid tribute to the magnificent work conducted by the Chairman of the Commission during his mandate.

3. Preliminary remarks by the Secretary-General

The new Regional Representative for the Americas, Francisco Madrid Flores, took the floor on behalf of the Secretary-General. He also apologized for the involuntary absence of Mr. Frangialli due to problems with flight connections, which finally prevented him from attending the meeting.

Mr. Madrid took this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the Regional Commission and the Organization, the President of EMBRATUR for the magnificent welcome and first-rate reception given to all the participants.

He then went on to summarize briefly all the activities carried out by the WTO Secretariat throughout 1999, drawing attention to the fact that two of the Organization's four basic commitments this year -the holding of the thirteenth session of the General Assembly in Chile and the Forum for Parliamentarians and Local Authorities in Brazil- will take place in the Americas region.

In view of its importance, he highlighted the recently-held Nice Conference on the Measurement of the Economic Impact of Tourism. This event, in which over 800 delegates took part, represents a milestone in the history of the Organization. The conclusions of the Conference will be submitted to the approval of the United Nations and a programme geared to promoting their application in all countries will be established.

4. Presentation of the statistical monograph for the region

The new Chief of the Market Research and Promotion Techniques Section, Augusto Huéscar, presented the monograph on tourism market trends in the Americas.

During his intervention, he highlighted the good overall progress of tourism both in the world and in the region, drawing attention to the performance of the different variables.

He also took this opportunity to distribute among the participants -in addition to the monograph- the study on the characteristics of seven tourism-generating countries recently carried out by his Section and which he hopes will be extended in the near future to encompass at least ten countries, and the publications prepared by the Canadian Tourism Commission, "An Analysis of Developments in Tourism Markets in Latin America and the Caribbean Region" and "An Analysis of the Problem Loans at Asian Banks: Trends, Issues and Implications".
The Members of the Commission thanked the government of Canada for this valuable information and for its kind contribution.

5. **Application to the region of the general programme of work for 1998-1999 and other activities**

The Secretariat briefly reviewed the activities conducted in the region in the last two years, relative to the different areas of the general programme of work, with special reference to its application in the Member Countries of the CAM. In the field of cooperation for development, it was recalled that UNDP has reduced its contribution, which is why the technical support missions will be financed through the UNDP Resident Representatives in each country on a case-by-case basis and at the specific request of the countries.

The breakdown of the activities carried out, both in the general programme and in the region, was presented and approved by the Members of the Commission.

6. **Cooperation between the Minister of Tourism of Mexico, VISA International and WTO Secretariat for the implementation of training programmes in the Americas region**

Francisco Madrid presented the SECTUR/VISA/WTO training programme, reminding the participants that it is divided into two parts. One part consists of product development seminars, which will be conducted on a subregional basis, the programme being scheduled to start next July in the Dominican Republic. The other part consists of the training programme relative to twenty specific posts and which will commence in October on the basis of scheduling courses to educate the educators.

With a view to programming these courses, the WTO Secretariat has established a provisional schedule which has been distributed among the Members of the Commission. Some countries have answered, and those who have not yet done so have been urged to respond swiftly.

The representative for VISA International ratified the support that VISA has been providing the countries in the region in this field. On behalf of all the Members, the Chairman of the Commission thanked VISA for its generosity and its extraordinary contribution to improving the quality of tourism services.

The Manual on Tourism Product Development and Marketing was distributed among the participants, who were informed that 4,000 copies have been produced in Spanish and 1,000 in English, and that if Brazil translates the manual into Portuguese, VISA will finance the printing of 500 copies in this language.
7. Presentation of the revised WTO Report on Tourism Legislation in the Americas region

Augusto Huéscar presented this revised report, the first version of which was distributed among the Members in May 1998 in Argentina. On congratulating the Secretariat for this report, the Chairman of the Commission called on the Members to submit within thirty days at the latest their remarks and observations relative to this report, with a view to producing the final version.

8. Results of the World Conference on the measurement of the economic impact of tourism, including the WTO Tourism Satellite Account

Augusto Huéscar highlighted the extraordinary response to this Conference, drawing attention to the fact that the United Nations is in the process of adopting the Tourism Satellite Account Manual prepared by the WTO Secretariat.

The Chilean delegation took the floor to stress the importance of methodological rigour in terms of establishing the Tourism Satellite Account, calling on all the countries to avoid falling back on opportunist solutions which, while cheap and swift, are not conducive to engendering a solid tool vindicating the powerful arguments which uphold the economic importance of tourism in policy and budget decisions.

The Chairman of the Commission collected the offers made by various delegates to share among the Members who so wish the experiences of various countries in the region, such as Dominican Republic, Chile, Mexico and Canada.

The meeting was also informed that the Seminar on Tourism Statistics for the implementation of the Tourism Satellite Accounts, solely targeting Latin American participants and sponsored by the Spanish government, was a success and that, as a result, steps are being taken to organize a second seminar in the near future.

This first Seminar was attended by 25 participants (17 of whom had received full grants) from the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

9. Global Code of Ethics for Tourism: ideas and guidelines

Augusto Huéscar briefly presented the Code, once again inviting the countries to express their opinions, noting that that some have already submitted their remarks in writing.

The delegates from Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Brazil set off an extremely valuable discussion in this respect, concluding that that the creation of a legally-binding instrument such as the Code does not appear to be feasible, but that, given its importance, it should be approached in the form of a Declaration. It was also proposed that a prototype be made available for use as a tool geared to conveying the importance of establishing a series of rules of conduct, both for service providers and communities, as well as for actual tourists.
10. **Draft general programme of work for 2000-2001**

The Regional Representative proceeded to present this item of the agenda, informing the Commission of the general lines of the draft general programme of work for the period 2000-2001.

The Commission approved the draft programme of work and urged the WTO Secretariat to implement it in full.

11. **Preparations for the thirteenth session of the General Assembly**

On behalf of the Secretary-General, Francisco Madrid acknowledged the tremendous support of the government of Chile and the enthusiasm with which the preparations are being tackled, which doubtless augurs well for the success of the General Assembly.

The National Director of Tourism of Chile once again invited the delegates to come to his country and proposed making a joint endeavour to strengthen the presence of the region at this forum.

12. **Place and date of the thirty-fifth meeting of the Commission**

It was announced that the Commission will hold its thirty-fifth meeting in Santiago de Chile on 25 September at 9.30 am, in the framework of the General Assembly.

The delegation of Peru reiterated its interest in hosting the next meeting of the Commission in the spring of 2000 and the delegation of Costa Rica also offered to host this meeting.

The Chairman of the Commission stated that a decision will be taken in this respect at the thirty-fifth meeting, in Santiago de Chile, and thanked both countries for their generous disposition.

13. **Other matters**

It was proposed that at future meetings, a space be devoted to enabling countries to share successful experiences relative to various initiatives conducted by countries in the region.

The Chairman of the Commission proposed that the Commission have its own page on the Internet.

Likewise, he asked the Secretary-General to prepare a study on experiences of private-sector handling of heritage sites worldwide.
The Commission agreed to approve the budget to create a Regional Roving Chair of Cultural Tourism, to be jointly promoted by WTO and UNESCO. VISA generously offered to sponsor this activity.

Finally, the President of Embratur, on behalf of all the participants, paid a warm tribute to Mr. Augusto Huéscar for his magnificent work as Regional Representative for the Americas during these last 9 years, and warmly welcomed his successor, Mr. Francisco Madrid Flores, to whom he wished every success in his new post.
CONCLUSIONS OF THE SEMINAR ON TOURISM AND CULTURE:
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION

Salvador de Bahia, Brazil
23-24 June 1999

The Opening Ceremony was attended by the President of EMBRATUR, Caio Luiz de Carvalho, the Secretary for Culture and Tourism of Bahia, Paulo Gaudenzi, by Augusto Huéscar, Chief of the Market Research and Promotion Techniques Section and by Francisco Madrid, WTO Regional Representative for the Americas, in addition to delegates and representatives of various countries of the region, and officials from cultural institutions, consultants and directors of higher education centres.

During this event, a Basic Introductory Report was presented by Sergio Molina, followed by a presentation of the Design of the Cultural Tourism Product, which was developed by Francisco Madrid.

Subsequently, cases of experiences of cultural tourism relative to Brazil, Chile, Peru and Mexico were presented, along with the Route of the Jesuit Missions of the Guarnis, which encompasses Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. The UNESCO Director of the Regional Office for Culture in Latin America and the Secretary for Culture and Tourism of Bahia also spoke about the relationship between tourism and culture. A written paper was also submitted by the Deputy Minister for Tourism of Colombia.

During the course of the Seminar, the concept of cultural tourism was acknowledged to be a very broad one which presently constitutes one of the basic pillars of development.

Cultural tourism is based on the notion of cultural heritage, which encompasses tangible aspects (archaeological areas and churches, for example) and intangible manifestations (traditions, craftsmanship, beliefs, rites, literature and music, among others).

Heritage provides a tourism destination or region with an identity and a feeling of belonging, singularity and unsurpassable competitive advantages. There is no doubt that tourism has made an indisputable contribution to disseminating the cultural heritage, particularly in the second half of this century.

The cultural heritage has proved to have enormous economic potential; it is a resource which is capable of generating new resources, which is why its conservation -and not only for this reason- is profitable. Gastronomy and the production of handicrafts are cultural industries which generate immediate economic spin-offs.
Nonetheless, the heritage should not be distorted or deformed, nor its fundamental values subordinated to commercial ends. In addition to meeting economic purposes, the heritage also fulfils other relevant functions: it preserves the memory, it is a unifying force, it establishes a sense of identity and a sense of belonging.

The existence of an indissoluble link between tourism and culture, the huge potential of cultural tourism in the countries of the region and the substantial contributions it can make to attempts to bring about economic and social development are reason in themselves to explain the presence of the State in cultural tourism.

The State should effectively lead efforts to steer cultural tourism, as in the case of Colombia, where it has been pursuing various lines of action, from the adaptation and strengthening of the legal, institutional and technical system to the incorporation of the heritage in the educational system, at basic, intermediate and higher level, as well as promoting the participation of broad social sectors, linking the handling of the cultural heritage with development policies and boosting research, among other initiatives.

In Peru, the State, through the National Institute of Culture, is responsible for protecting and conserving the heritage, and with regard to other countries, such as Mexico, attention was drawn to the importance the State places on policies geared to conserving the cultural heritage.

Constant reference was made to the importance of heritage sites and monuments as resources which are capable of generating economic and social development and as a driving force for tourism in particular, a situation which raises the need to integrate various sectors with a view to promoting simultaneous and compatible investments in restoration, conservation and management projects, and tourism infrastructure and equipment projects.

Likewise, attention was drawn to the need to strengthen integration within sectors. Different visions often exist -even among communities- as to the use to which heritage resources should be put.

Tourism could be considered as a vehicle for the integration of the Americas, thus contributing to turning the region into a great tourism destination. One of the experiences which has seen a lot of development is the Integrated Route of the Jesuit Missions of the Guarnis, which includes the participation of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

This project seeks to recapture and disseminate a privileged moment in the history of these countries of South America: the organization of the Jesuits and Guarnis in the settlements of Christianized Indians and the missionary region. To this end, facilitation, infrastructure and tourism programme development, joint promotional campaigns, the creation of a corporate image and familiarization trips for tour operators are being implemented. In this framework, cultural tourism plays a strategic role in regional integration and in galvanizing development.
Cultural tourism in the Americas region has huge potential, which is why it is liable to make important contributions to development.

Countries such as Peru, for example, are perceived as historic-archaeological type tourism destinations, with a heritage consisting of close to 10,000 monuments. This country has also carved out market niches for itself with highly specialized products in the field of cultural tourism, health tourism, mystic tourism and archaeological tourism, etc. Mexico, with some 200,000 archaeological areas, is another destination whose strong identity is also conducive to promoting cultural tourism.

In addition, suffice it to say that of the 552 sites registered on the world heritage list, 104 of them are located in America and the Caribbean, a fact which generates considerable publicity and prospects on various markets, but at the same time involves a commitment on the part of governments to protect them, as well as the implication of international action. The “heritage of mankind” stamp, awarded to important sites, should generate initiatives geared to exploiting this category: reforms of policies and local by-laws, for example.

However, in order to obtain increasing benefits derived from the exploitation of heritage manifestations and sites, not only is the leadership of the State indispensable, but also the participation of other actors:

- Local governments, which have a very important role to play in terms of recovering and conserving historic centres and buildings which are valuable from a heritage standpoint. In this respect, there is call to mention the initiative of the Municipality of Lima, Peru, which has promoted programmes to adopt a balcony and to embellish the city’s main squares.

- The private sector, which could contribute to endeavours to salvage and conserve the cultural heritage, in specific areas or complexes, buildings or monuments of value, and also to defining and applying handling plans, actively participating in the execution of projects.

- Local communities, which play a key role in terms of the efforts being made to know, interpret and sustain history and culture, as is the case of Easter Island, in Chile, which is attempting to consolidate itself as a special-interest destination.

Along these lines and with a view to obtaining increasing benefits, seven factors contributing to the success of cultural tourism have been identified:

- Differentiation
- Creativity
- Thematic characterization
- Commercial loyalty programmes
- Enhanced customer service
• Community participation
• Listening to tourists

Cultural tourism plays an important role in terms of galvanizing and diversifying tourist flows, palliating the effects of seasonality, attracting high expenditure tourism and diversifying product supply, bearing in mind the great variety of cultural tourism products which can be developed.

In this context, it was explained that any boost to cultural tourism should take account of experiences which have turned out to be valuable in some countries, as is the case of:

❖ The application of federal and local incentives of various types, such as the exemptions from real estate tax, discounts in Public Registry fees and training backup in Mexico.

❖ The integration of the tourism sector and culture with small enterprises and local arts and crafts industries, as in Mexico and Peru.

❖ The preparation and distribution among people who market travel and products, of manuals of sales of destinations and routes, as is the case of the Integrated Route of the Jesuit Missions of the Guarnís.

❖ The major possibilities offered by international technical cooperation, which in Peru has been channelled through the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and the University of Tokyo.

❖ The design of cultural routes —such as the Silk Road and the Slave Route— which make a considerable impact on the development of cultural tourism.

❖ Inviting tour operators to take part in stretches of multi-destination tours, in their capacity as market experts, with a view to enabling them to familiarize themselves with the products and to detect service requirements.

One of the areas most analysed was the subject of legal aspects relative to the use and conservation of the heritage and, more specifically, the participation of the private sector in the management or handling of heritage sites and monuments.

In this context, it was agreed that research will be conducted with a view to identifying and exploring the feasibility of implementing new forms of private-sector participation.

During the Seminar, mention was made of the possibility of creating a joint cultural tourism Chair, between the WTO Commission for the Americas and UNESCO, and which should ideally be established in the short term.
### LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES/
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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