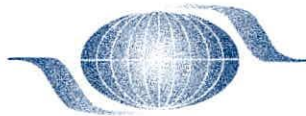


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ACTIONS IN FAVOUR OF THE TSUNAMI-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

Note by the Secretary-General

In this document, the Secretary-General informs the Assembly of the actions undertaken in favour of the tsunami affected countries following the Phuket Action Plan adopted on 1 February 2005.

ACTIONS IN FAVOUR OF THE TSUNAMI-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the aftermath of the Tsunami of 26 December 2004, one of the world's unprecedented natural disasters, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) undertook a series of emergency actions as follows:

- For the first time in the history of the Organization, the Secretary-General convened on 29 December 2004 an emergency session of the WTO Executive Council in order to assess the situation and its impact on tourism. Phuket, being the Tourism "epicentre" of the tragedy, was chosen as the venue of this emergency meeting.
- Two special envoys of the WTO were dispatched to Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives to assess the extent of the disaster in the tourism destinations.
- An emergency task force was constituted of senior tourism officials, Industry leaders, high level tourism experts and regional and international institutions.
- For the first time in the history of the organization, an emergency Executive Council meeting was held on 1 February 2005 in Phuket Thailand. The Emergency Task Force submitted the draft action plan, which was unanimously adopted by the Executive Council as the **Phuket Action Plan**. At this meeting, Government representatives from 42 countries as well as Industry leaders, regional organizations and financial institutions were brought together by WTO.
- The Phuket Action Plan prioritized five operational areas:
 - a. Effective communications
 - b. Community relief
 - c. Professional training
 - d. Sustainable redevelopment
 - e. Risk management

2. It is recalled that the Phuket Action Plan required the review and evaluation of the progress of the implementation of the Plan by holding regular meetings of the Task Force. The second task force meeting took place on the 10 March at the ITB in Berlin where the detailed project proposals were enumerated with an assessment of the activities that had been carried out during the month since the first task force meeting took place in Phuket. The latest post tsunami actions on the tourism industry undertaken by WTO were presented to the substantive session on the Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the UN Economic and Social Council on 13 July 2005. The present report to the General Assembly reviews the work that has been done so far and those still to be completed.

II. GENERAL

Increasing international attention:

3. It is encouraging to note that the Phuket Action Plan has drawn extremely positive response from the various sectors of the tourism community at international, regional and local levels. This universally adopted Plan has been well-received, judging from the fact that many stakeholders have already switched into various actions aimed at the rapid recovery from the disaster.

Focus on immediate needs and communication:

4. During the period under review, the WTO Secretariat concentrated its work program on the immediate needs that have been identified in the Phuket Action Plan with particular focus on effective communications and raising awareness of the recovery efforts in the affected destinations.

Special Coordination Unit has been in full operation:

5. In accordance with Item 10 of the Phuket Action Plan, the WTO Secretary-General, upon his return from the inspection tour of the four tsunami affected countries in February 2005, immediately set up a Coordination Unit within the Secretariat that is exclusively devoted to the monitoring and the direct implementation of the activities relating to the Phuket Action Plan. One senior marketing specialist was recruited to the Coordination Unit while RCI International sponsored an IT and a communications expert to assist in improving the WTO website on tsunami recovery. It is pertinent to mention that all departments of the WTO Secretariat are now putting tsunami recovery on top of their work agenda to actively support the implementation of the Plan.

Report to UN:

6. Right after the Phuket meeting, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the UN Secretary-General on the details of the Phuket meeting deliberations and measures being taken by WTO and the international tourism community.

Contributions:

7. In terms of soliciting more international support to the recovery scheme, various organizations have made their contributions either financially or in kind, namely SNV of the Netherlands, the Governments of the Republic of Korea, Spain, and Andorra, GTZ of Germany, Visa International, RCI, Thai Airways International, and various fair organizers (enumerated under waiving of fair fees). The fine example of the Government of Korea integrating bilateral initiatives into that of the global efforts demands special acknowledgement and WTO encourages other national governments to do the same. The full implementation of the Phuket Action Plan requires further support of funding either through multilateral or bilateral arrangements, as the current level of commitments is not sufficient enough to cover the needs of the recovery efforts.

Review Seminar 1:

8. WTO has engaged the services of one crisis management expert at the request of the Maldivian Government to review the work undertaken by the Maldives in tsunami recovery and to map out the future course of action. This took the form of a series of workshops and a seminar from the 24 to the 30 May 2005 in Male with the various stakeholders, the Ministry of Tourism of the Maldives and the Maldives Tourist Promotion Board on the impact of the tsunami, marketing and communications.

Review Seminar 2:

9. In view of the current travel slump after an initial recovery, a consultative meeting on post-tsunami tourism recovery was organized by the World Tourism Organization and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand in Phuket on 27 June 2005 to review the work done on tsunami recovery and to assess the future requirements. During the meeting, it was announced that three tsunami early warning towers have been installed in Patong Beach, Phuket and the Thai Government will set up similar systems along with other safety measures in eleven beaches before the end of August.

III. COMMUNICATION**Live information updates:**

10. The first task of the Coordinating Unit was to set up the tsunami recovery website of the WTO. This site, linked to the main WTO website www.world-tourism.org is completely autonomous, catering to the needs of professionals and the public alike. It features the ongoing activities of the WTO in tsunami recovery, reflecting the work of the Organization and other inter-related institutions such as UN bodies, professional organizations (PATA), Governments, travel trade, media, and last but not least, the affected countries, in a more centralized manner. The biggest advantage of this site is its linkage with the sites of these organizations, thereby giving access to further information and data on tsunami issues pertaining to tourism recovery in general and to the four countries, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives in particular. WTO is also actively revamping the website and updating it with the latest tourism related news from the region and has recently introduced video footages which carry recent images of the destinations to provide a more positive image of the region. Therefore it can be proudly said that the WTO site is the most up-to-date information unit on tourism recovery following the tsunami and is the voice of international tourism.

Familiarization trips organized by various organizations:

11. One of the areas under marketing and communications of the Phuket Action Plan was clear, detailed and abundant information to recover the confidence of the marketplace. In this respect tour operators play a vital role. While a majority of the tour operators has its own source of information, it was seen by the WTO that a symbolic trip by the major operators at a senior management level will help to boost visitor confidence, and at the same time, give the governments concerned an opportunity to update the operators with the progress and plans in terms of infrastructure development, marketing & communications and to diffuse this information to the general media. Therefore, the following FAM trips to the affected region have been completed or yet to be made:

WTO FAM trip of tour operators to Sri Lanka and the Maldives: In this respect, a FAM trip of two senior tour operators, Mr. Martin Brackenbury, President IFTO and Mr. Fulvio Oginibene, Chairman, Hotelplan Italy, visited Sri Lanka/Maldives from the 5 to the 11 April 2005, and their findings have been summarised in the WTO website with the various recommendations forwarded to the respective countries.

WTO FAM trip of tour operators to Indonesia: A similar FAM trip is planned in September 2005 to Indonesia, with the participation of various senior tour operators from the major European and Asian generating market. For this occasion, the trip is planned to coincide with the travel mart TIME to be held in Yogyakarta on the 23-27 September.

Mega-FAM trip for South Thailand: Over 800 international tour operators and travel journalists visited the Andaman coastal provinces of Thailand for a Mega-Fam Trip from 3 – 7 March, 2005. The familiarization trip was organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), THAI Airways International, Tourism Council of Thailand (TCT) and the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB).

Republic of Korea: Apart from joining the FAM tour organized by TAT of Thailand, the Government of the Republic of Korea, through its Ministry of Culture and Tourism, has responded to the global efforts by initiating Korean journalist groups to visit Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia in March of this year. FAM trips for tour operators of Korea were carried out in May 2005.

WTO FAM trip of Chinese tour operators and travel writers to Thailand: With the participation of the Southern Comfort China Travel Group and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, a WTO FAM trip consisting of the major tour operators from the Chinese market is planned for August 2005 to visit the coastal provinces of Thailand.

More FAM tours of tour operators by generating countries: The Coordination Unit has actively encouraged the governments of Australia, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea to sponsor more FAM trips of tour operators and travel media as part of the global recovery efforts.

WTO press trip to four countries: Sixteen internationally renowned journalists joined two press trips organized by the World Tourism Organization in partnership with Indonesia, Thailand, Maldives and Sri Lanka from 24 February to 5 March 2005. The task of the mission was to research the actual damage in tourist resorts, to provide balanced and honest information and to restore confidence of the consumers as well as the travel trade. The group included prominent journalists from major tourism generating markets such as United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Russia. Numerous articles were published following these two trips and are featured in the WTO website.

WTO Communications experts:

12. WTO has provided the services of two communications experts in Indonesia (May-July 2005) and in Sri Lanka (June-July 2005). The mission of the experts has provided positive and updated information on tourism of both Indonesia and Sri Lanka that is reflected in the WTO website and in major media channels. The experts also liaised with the stakeholders and media in respective countries and trained an Officer who is continuing the work upon the completion of their assignment.

TOURCOM Conference:

13. Tourist resorts in Indonesia suffered no direct damage from tsunami, but faced severe decrease of visitors as a result of the residual effect of the image problem. In this respect, the WTO regional TOURCOM Conference was held from 20-21 May in Bali, bringing together journalists and tourism communicators and updating their knowledge about tourism and the tsunami recovery process. Mr. Bill Clinton, former President of the United States and Special Envoy of the United Nations for Tsunami Relief, made a video address to the 200 delegates of the Conference.

Stickers and posters:

14. As part of the global communication campaign, WTO produced 20,000 copies of promotional stickers under the slogan of **"Tsunami - tourism helps recovery"**. Posters of similar nature have also been produced. Copies were distributed to the general public during ITB and in other occasions.

Waiving of fair fees:

15. In terms of fee waiving for tourism trade fairs, more and more organizers are responding to the appeal made in the Phuket Action Plan. According to the information received by the Coordination Unit so far, fees have been waived by FITUR (January) of Spain, KOTFA (June) of Korea, Busan International Travel Fair 2005 (October) of Korea, BITTM (April) of China and Utazas (March) of Hungary. TCV (April) in Valencia, Spain, and Tianguis (April) in Acapulco, Mexico. The Coordination Unit is in contact with other organizers of fairs such as CITM, JATA, REED EXHIBITIONS Ltd; as well as with national governments. The latest fair organizer to support this action is the SITV of Colmar, France, in November 2005.

Market Study 1:

16. Visa International sponsored a Visa/WTO joint market research on the consumer perception of the 4 affected countries. This survey was conducted in major tourist source markets throughout the world. The study provides a quick reference and a scientific base for tour operators to resume their activity in the affected destinations and for the national tourism administrations to orient their advertising campaign in generating countries.

Market Study 2:

17. Visa International updated their initial survey and presented their findings to the TOURCOM Conference in Bali (20-21 May), and it was clearly evident that the pace of the recovery process remains much to be desired especially as a result of misconceptions and misinformation at source markets.

Global advertising campaign for the Region:

18. Through the findings of the Visa International survey, it became obvious that there was a dire need for global advertising campaign for the region. As advertising is costly and financial assistance for this type of activity is extremely difficult to obtain, the Secretary General of WTO, with the support of the Spanish Government, has initiated contact with the EU for the possibility of a global advertising campaign to target residual fears of potential tourists. The campaign is proposed to be sponsored by EU through multilateral arrangements.

Market Study 3:

19. In addition to the consumer perception survey deriving from the demand side, the WTO Secretariat is actively collecting information from the supply side in terms of visitor flows, air traffic patterns as well as hotel occupancy levels in the affected destinations. The results of this exercise will be released by the WTO Market Intelligence and Promotion Department. It is pertinent to mention that the *Asociación Española de Expertos Científicos en Turismo*, in an act of solidarity, pledged a token of contribution for the implementation of the tsunami action plan. While the amount is small in comparison to the needs, it is nevertheless a worthy contribution that can be used to enhance knowledge through research.

IV. COMMUNITY RELIEF

WTO impact evaluation mission to Maldives:

20. in relation to GDP in the country: The need for the international tourism community to inform donor agencies and governments about the remaining problems and encourage them to channel more funds to the tourism sector, has led to the organization of a mission of economic impact analysis of the tsunami on the GDP of the country. One specific objective of this mission was to identify on a micro level the assistance needs of the hoteliers in terms of recovery funds. A report has been submitted.

WTO missions on funds channelling to tourism SMEs:

21. The WTO Secretariat commissioned studies on Thailand and Sri Lanka in order to assess the situation of funding relating to the SMEs in the tourism sector in these two countries. The mission to Sri Lanka was implemented by a senior WTO Consultant, while that of Thailand was carried out by a former senior UNDP official. Both missions are aimed at formulating guidelines on how to channel recovery funds to small and medium tourism enterprises.

22. Based on the study on Sri Lanka, WTO organized a joint workshop with the Sri Lanka Tourist Board in Colombo on the 13-14 July 2005 on "Microfinance and Assistance to SMEs in the Tourism Sector". The workshop was attended by 75 local participants from the public and local sectors – Ministry and Tourist Board officials, representatives from banks and Chambers of Commerce and NGOs. The International Finance Corporation and Planet Finance were amongst the foreign participants.

23. A similar workshop is planned for Thailand in September/October.

Canada:

24. The President and CEO of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada wrote to WTO offering the Association's assistance to one of the Tsunami affected countries. The Association is particularly keen in helping one tourism community which was severely affected by tsunami. The Coordinating Unit is in touch with the Sri Lankan authorities and has identified a beach resort on the East Coast destroyed by the tsunami.

V. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Elementary skills training 1:

25. With regard to elementary basic skills training in hospitality services, work is being initiated in Thailand. WTO will offer two-week courses for elementary basic skills training in various disciplines of hotel management. The courses would focus on service and waiting, food and beverage, front office, housekeeping and accommodation services and food production. The courses would be organized in October in a hotel in Phuket.

Elementary skills training 2:

26. Similar courses are being prepared in association with one company called In-House Hospitality Training Ltd. which is based in Thailand. The Coordination Unit is proposing to seek funding for this project from the Government of Australia or other sources.

Pair-city link for tsunami help:

27. Joint WTO.HRD/City of Madrid Sbest Mentoring for Excellence in Human Resource Development and Services in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

28. A project is proposed to provide mentoring for excellence in human resource development, management and service in the City of Colombo and the Western State of Sri Lanka. This expertise would be provided through the WTO.HRD Department, the City of Madrid Department of Tourism and the WTO Education Council. The output of this project will be the permanent adoption of the City of Colombo and the Western State of Sri Lanka by the City of Madrid and the WTO.EdC for continuous improvement in the area of public/private destination management and excellence of service in tourism. This would also be a good start for other similar tourism-for-development projects in destinations affected by the tsunami. Two experts are due to visit Sri Lanka to assess the situation.

Practicum:

29. WTO prepared one proposal to seek special financial assistance for two participants to enable officials from countries seriously affected by the tsunami to attend the WTO.HRD Practicum which they did at the end of April for the courses organized at the WTO headquarters.

Repositioning and image recovery:

30. A one-week technical seminar to be conducted by WTO.HRD, the Education Council and other leading experts in positioning, re-positioning and image recovery of Indonesia in Jakarta in October 2005. The conclusion of this project will be a solid scientific/professional brief jointly agreed executive plan to re-position tourism destinations after a crisis. It will not only help this particular destination, but will also create an excellent case study for other instances in the area. The Government of Andorra will finance this project.

VI. SUSTAINABLE REDEVELOPMENT**Indicators workshop:**

31. WTO undertook an "Indicators" workshop in Phuket from the 12 to the 15 May 2005 on the subject of sustainable tourism development. Participants from the tsunami affected destinations attended the workshop. The workshop was conducted on the basis of the newly published WTO indicators study on sustainable tourism development. The results should provide a good source of benchmarking destinations in sustainable practices.

Green Belt Redevelopment 1:

32. WTO identified some longer term initiatives in Sri Lanka with regard to Green Belt redevelopment and Infrastructure Development on the Southwest coast of the country. The expected output of this initiative will be an updated tourism development master plan for development of coastal tourism in Sri Lanka based on sustainable tourism practices including specific guidelines for zoning and coastal tourism management. The mission was completed in May 2005 and the report has been submitted.

Green Belt Redevelopment 2:

33. Similar initiatives are being pursued in Thailand. The issue of green belt redevelopment in Phuket and outlying areas is identified. A tourism development master plan is being sought after for development of coastal tourism in Phuket and outlying areas based on sustainable tourism practices including specific guidelines for zoning and coastal tourism management. Funding is awaited.

Third Tourism Master Plan for Maldives:

34. As for the Republic of Maldives, the Government requested WTO to start working on a third tourism development master plan. Especially after what happened to the country during the disaster, it was felt that there is an urgent need for the tourism sector to look at some long term perspectives of the sector. The focus would be the repositioning of the country and the diversification of its main source markets.

Regional Tourism Plan for Thailand:

35. The tourism industry in Southern Thailand has taken a severe hit after the Tsunami with loss of tourism infrastructure and tourism plant as well as loss of skilled staff. In this respect, one project has been identified, aiming to provide the Government of Thailand, represented by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, with a sustainable Regional Tourism Development Master Plan for the Southern provinces of Thailand. The project will provide strategies and guidelines for sustainable tourism development practices, including beach resort development and human resource development. Emphasis will be placed on protection of the physical, historic and cultural environments and tourism resources at the local level and would also provide policies for the diversification of the tourism products in Southern Thailand. Funding is awaited.

VII. RISK MANAGEMENT

Advanced Technology Emergency Information Network in the Tourism Sector:

36. Tsunami reinforced the belief that tourism is a frequently exposed sector to natural and man-made disasters. Such exposure calls for new permanent mechanisms to prepare for their inevitable occurrence, to mitigate risk and to enhance response. In this regard, preparatory work has been initiated and a small Steering Group is being set up to work towards the eventual establishment of the global Advanced Technology Emergency Information Network for the tourism sector, as proposed in the Phuket Action Plan. Materialisation of this system will fill up the gap that exists in the field of communications /information exchange and on the interface among tourism industry, government, international organization, NGO and media action. This work is being closely co-coordinated with related general "emergency" initiatives in the World Economic Forum and in the private sector.

Crisis management seminar at SATTE in India:

37. WTO, in collaboration with the South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE), organized an Asia-Pacific Seminar on Crisis Management which was held in New Delhi, India from 20-21 April 2005. SATTE is the biggest tourism and travel trade fair in South Asia and served as an excellent forum to bring together representatives from the public and private sectors, and to discuss the latest developments in formulating and implementing crisis management plans. Case study presentations on crisis management plans for both natural and man-made disasters such as the Tsunami, SARS, terrorism, and, financial crises were delivered by representatives from Australia, China, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka as well as presentations from the private sector, the International Federation of Tour Operators and regional organizations such as UNESCAP. Approximately 80 participants from 12 countries actively participated in the deliberations of the seminar

WTO workshop on crisis management in Maldives:

38. One workshop together with training activities was scheduled in June/July 2005 for Maldives. It is aimed at building awareness about the need for integrated and participative crisis management within the tourism industry--both the public and private sectors--and in other related government agencies, such as public safety, health, environmental protection and aviation. The workshop also gave detail on how to create a crisis management team and a crisis plan, and prepared tourism workers in practical crisis management techniques.

WTO workshop on crisis management in Thailand:

39. One similar workshop is being planned in October with the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand in collaboration with the Thammasat University and the University of Hawaii in conjunction with the Government's plan to conduct training activities for the tourism industry.

WTO youth camp in Southern Thailand:

40. A seven day workshop for 50 youth from Thailand's tsunami effected areas is planned to be conducted in October 2005 by the Asian Center for Tourism Planning and Poverty Reduction. Its goal is to develop strong and committed local leaders in Tsunami affected areas who can help their own people.

VIII. CONCLUSION

41. It is worthwhile noting that despite the magnitude of the tsunami in terms of death and destruction, the impact on global tourism is limited as the region constitutes only 3 % of worldwide tourist arrivals and the affected countries less than 1%. However, the international community cannot remain complacent or inactive since the repercussions on regional tourism and on the countries themselves are extremely serious. For example, 62% GDP of Maldives comprises tourism and fishing. Maldives had an economic growth rate of over 8% in 2004 and it is expected to drop to 1% in 2005. Tourism is also the lifeline of Phuket and its region. Hotel occupancy in most affected countries is around 30-40% at present, well below the average, particularly when compared to the revival in 2004 which was an exceptionally good year for the entire region. Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives have all lost their summer season. It is also necessary to make a qualitative evaluation of post-tsunami activities. As enumerated in the report, a great deal has been achieved in communications and community relief. WTO hopes that the regional advertising campaign for which EU support has been solicited through Spanish intervention will materialize soon. Early warning systems have been installed in Phuket and sustainable tourism development practices are being implemented in Patong Beach and in Sri Lanka. As Mr. Bill Clinton, former US President and Special Envoy for UN Tsunami Relief Effort, said at the 25th ECOSOC meeting in New York on the 14 July 2005: "You should know, in my opinion at least, that in each country, the UN teams bringing together all the agencies are doing a good job and working hard to support the work of the governments in implementing their own plans. But I believe we need to move forward quickly on a global risk reduction agenda and to improve the systems and policies for disasters before they hit, as well as to help accelerate the pace of the recovery in the affected countries".

