

Nom del diàleg: Turisme, diversitat cultural i desenvolupament

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Ponent: Francesco Frangialli



ORGANISATION MONDIALE DU TOURISME  
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION  
ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL DEL TURISMO  
ВСЕМИРНАЯ ТУРИСТСКАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ  
منظمة السياحة العالمية

FORUM BARCELONA 2004

**Dialogue Tourism, cultural diversity and sustainable development**  
**Barcelona, 14-16 July 2004**

I would like to thank the Forum Barcelona for their invitation to the World Tourism Organization to talk on the subject of “**The ethical commitment of tourism**” Many people may find this subject rather strange: How does Tourism and Ethics relate to one another? However, ethical issues have become very relevant in these times of international uncertainty and in the face of the many serious challenges concerning the future of the world.

Ethical questions – questions about the way we live and do business and interact with one-another, have become major issues that will decide what kind of future we will inherit. Concern about the future has increased in the wake of the numerous terrorist attacks, the war in Iraq, the growth of religious radicalism and regional conflicts, but also by the clear signals that our present lifestyles and consumption patterns are severely damaging the ecosystems that support life on earth and contribute significantly to global warming with all its disastrous long-term consequences.

Tourism is linked to all these issues by the fact that it has become one of the biggest economic activities of our time. The total impact of the tourism industry goes far beyond the direct economic value it has for those whose business activities directly depend on it. It reaches into the social and cultural lives of peoples and countries and is linked to the natural environment and the way we preserve our planet and heritage. The phenomenal growth of tourism over the last 55 years has changed society and life-styles and contributed to create a more open, globalised world. International tourist arrivals increased from a mere 25 million in 1950 to 700 million in 2000. Tourism has grown into the biggest export industry and a leading force in the service sector.

The long-term future of the industry remains incredibly positive. Simply because more borders are opening up, and transport is becoming more available to more places. And, most importantly, more people will have the opportunity and disposable income to travel. Even with adjusted growth rates, we expect that the industry will double over the next 15 to 20 years – in some regions much faster than in others.

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The valuable contribution tourism is making to economic development, job creation, foreign exchange earnings and social stability in countries around the world has led to a new appraisal of the key role of this sector in development strategies. The unanimous decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations to change the status of WTO into that of a fully-fledged Specialised Agency of the UN is indicative of the impact of tourism on society. The decision of the UN placed tourism on equal footing with such other principal activities of human society as industry, agriculture, transport, education, culture, labour and health for which Specialised Agencies have been established.

The important point to emphasize is that while tourism is a forceful development activity and is making significant contributions to economic growth and job creation, not any kind of tourism is good or acceptable. Opportunistic and unguided tourist development can have a profound negative impact on the natural- and cultural environment, as well as on the social lives of people in receiving destinations – particularly in developing countries. In the absence of sound development policies tourism can contribute to pollution and environmental degradation; lead to the exploitation of people and local communities – particularly women and children, offend traditional cultural values and customs and provide a cover for criminal activities.

What the tourism industry needed was a commitment to a code of guidelines, criteria and basic principles to protect it from all kinds of abuses. In other words, the industry was in need of a set of standards – or a code of ethics - that would secure the long-term responsible and sustainable development of the industry. WTO had this in mind and various important declarations and resolutions of the members of the Organization over the years reflect the intention to provide the tourism sector with a code of conduct. A few of the significant milestones are: the Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code adopted at Sofia in 1985; the resolution on the prevention of organised sex tourism by the General Assembly of WTO in Cairo in 1995; the Manila Declaration of 1997 on the Social Impact of Tourism and eventually – as the culmination of this process – the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism that was unanimously accepted by the General Assembly of WTO in Santiago de Chile in 1999.

WTO believes that few sectors of the economy are so strategically positioned as tourism to make a meaningful contribution to the major challenges we face in our times. Tourism is *par excellence* a people to people activity and the strength of the industry can be better deployed to help cement peace,

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promote development, create jobs, stabilise societies and root out many of the abuses that can infiltrate society through tourism. When the World Tourism Organization was established almost 30 years ago it was given a clear mandate to promote tourism in a way that would benefit countries, communities and people – a responsible, sensitive and sustainable tourism. The mission of the Organization – as indicated in Article 3 of the Statutes – was to: “contribute to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion”.

The Challenge for WTO and the tourism industry is to minimise the negative and maximise the positive impacts of tourism development or – to word it differently – develop tourism on the basis of sound and fundamental values. Tourism development should be an activity that serves humanity and provides more than only material benefits to people.

We recognise the fact that the tourism private sector - that constitute the engine of the tourism industry – needs to make a fair profit. Tourism is their business and the many small and large enterprises in this sector have to make a good return on their investments. Without the private sector the tourism industry would not have developed into the strong and powerful industry it is today. However, we also believe that successful businesses cannot exist as islands on their own – they should form part of the society and community in which they operate. Like individuals, businesses have to be guided by moral and ethical principles and accept the social responsibilities that their positions demand. The Code of Ethics provides a checklist to all the stakeholders regarding their social and ethical responsibilities. It provides a road map for the development and implementation of sustainable tourism. The ten articles of the Code provide guidelines for different stakeholders on key aspects of the industry.

The drafting of the Code consisted of an extensive process of consultations with various stakeholders that lasted more than 2 years. Since its acceptance by the General Assembly of WTO in 1999, the Code has been translated in more than 20 languages. A large number of countries have formally accepted the Code and instituted a process to promote adherence by different sectors of the industry. A number of Governments tabled the Code in their Parliaments for official acceptance; others introduced elements of the Code in their national legislation. For WTO, the Code of Ethics forms the

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centrepiece of its programme of work – the umbrella under which all the various activities of the Organization take place.

Reading through the ten articles of the Code you will find a collection of clear and fundamental principles that should guide the behaviour of the different stakeholders in different sectors of the industry. The strength of the code lies in its simplicity and straightforward clarity. Together, the ten articles constitute a powerful set of guidelines that provides clear direction for responsible behaviour. The Code has received a warm reception wherever it was introduced. There is a favourable climate as people around the world are tired of maltreatment, abuse, corruption and crude materialism. They seek strength and guidance from moral and ethical values. There has been renewed interest in behaviour based on fundamental values – examples are the efforts to establish criteria for fair trade; environmental indicators; corporate social responsibility, community involvement and many others.

The ten articles of the Code are introduced by a **Preamble** that refers to important developments that preceded the Code and mention other international instruments that are complementary to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. The Preamble affirms the right of tourists to travel and the signatories state their wish to “promote an equitable, responsible and sustainable world tourism order”, whose benefits will be shared by all sectors of society in the context of an open and liberalised world economy.

It would take too much time to read each of the ten articles here. However, it is only when one takes the time to read each article carefully and consider the meaning and implication of each one - and of the ten collectively - that one realises the powerful message it contains for governments, industry, civil society, and all the other role players related to the tourism industry.

It must be clearly understood that the GCET is a **voluntary, non-binding** code of conduct that companies can examine to develop their internal and external policies with regard to issues such as human rights, environment, local economic development and cultural diversity. A brief summary of the diverse themes addressed by the ten articles might give you a better feel and understanding of the Code.

- Article 1: Deals with tourism’s contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies. It states that tourism should promote the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of



tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs that forms both the foundation of responsible tourism.

- Article 2: Deals with the equality of men and women and respect for human rights, particularly those of the most vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, ethnic minorities. The article states that sexual exploitation, particularly of children, should be penalized without concession.
- Article 3: Deals with the protection of the natural environment, saving water and energy and safeguarding biodiversity and the sensitive ecosystems on which life on earth depends.
- Article 4: Deals with the cultural heritage of mankind that should be protected and passed on to future generations, but also made accessible to tourists.
- Article 5: Emphasises that all stakeholders, including local populations and the people in remote and depressed locations, should share in the benefits of tourism on a fair and equitable basis.
- Article 6: Refers to the various responsibilities and duties of Tourism professionals, public authorities, governments and the media. It deals with information, contractual obligations, safety and security issues, travel advisories of governments and reporting by the media.
- Article 7: States that periodic rest periods and leisure comprise a fundamental human right for all people and should be respected.
- Article 8: Deals with freedom of travel within one's country or from one State to another as a human right that should not be undermined by excessive formalities or other forms of discrimination. The maximum freedom of movement to travel should be allowed and border-crossing formalities should be harmonised and simplified.
- Article 9: Focuses on the rights of workers as well as entrepreneurs in the tourism industry. It deals with fair employment practises; social protection; the minimum legal or administrative restrictions for entrepreneurs to enter the tourism sector; the role of multinational businesses and the importance of partnerships in tourism.
- Article 10: Makes provision for a World Committee on Tourism Ethics. The mission of the Committee is to make the Code a living document. The Committee has to promote the Code and encourage its implementation; monitor adherence; communicate with stakeholders and keep the principles of the Code in the public eye. The protocol also envisages a voluntary process through which the Committee could facilitate in the conciliation of disputes. The Code is voluntary and not

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binding, unless governments include the Code or elements of it in their national legislation. It is not a law, but an appeal to the moral sense of stakeholders. Human behaviour is guided by moral values – a fundamental understanding of right and wrong – based on religious and philosophical convictions and human traditions and experiences over centuries of civilization. It is to this sense of responsibility that the Code appeals.

**The appointment of the World Committee was finalised in October 2003 at the General Assembly of WTO held in Beijing, China. The Committee held its first meeting in February this year in Rome where Mr. Diego Cordovez, a previous UN Under-Secretary, was elected as chairman. At its first meeting, the Committee decided on a work programme to comply with their mandate.**

**The General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution in October 2002 in which they give recognition to the Global Code of Ethics and called on the tourism industry to adhere to its principles. The UN also requested WTO to report regularly to the General Assembly on the progress of its implementation. The support of the General Assembly of the United Nations for the implementation of the Code has given the initiative important momentum and a high-level profile. A strong positive response from all the sectors of the industry to this challenge will be well received by the people of the world – it would contribute to establish tourism as a serious and sensitive industry that cares for the well being of people, their traditions and cultures, and the future of our planet.**