

**Forum:** United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)  
**Issue:** “The Question of Establishing a Code of Ethics for Tourism”  
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**Position:** President

### Introduction

What does “Ethical Tourism” mean? Ethical Tourism simply means tourism which benefits people and the environment in different ways. For example it can promote local services and products made by local people, therefore providing families with an extra income.

Traveling is no longer an activity reserved for the richest in society. With cheap flights and accommodation, many people manage to explore the farthest corners of the world and take a vacation at least once a year even for a long time. And everyone knows that tourism is great not only for travelers but also for the countries they travel through. For vacationers, traveling is a chance to broaden the mind, explore different sights, meet new people from different nationalities and learn about their culture and traditions. For all holiday destinations, tourism is an important, if not the main, source of economic income and a great number of travelers leads to building many infrastructures such as roads, railways, airports, hotels, resorts etc. However, particularly in the last decades, many countries, especially the developing ones, are beginning to feel that the economic benefits no longer outweigh the environmental and cultural destruction. So, taking care of fragile environments, preserving forests, maintaining untouched places has become more and more important.

### Key Words

**UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization):** The World Tourism Organization is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism;

**Responsible Tourism:** refers to the consumers’ choice of destination and mode of transport based on correct ethical, political and racial sensitivities based on the respect for the environment and local cultures;

**Green Tourism:** this word used to indicate a kind of tourism which does not harm the environment and does not concern itself with cultural or economic elements of the destination. The term has currently become broader to incorporate full sustainable tourism principles;

**Ethical Tourism:** Ethical tourism was born and has evolved as a term when a tourist or a tourist operator considers traveling to a destination where ethical values are in danger, e.g. presence of social injustice or human rights violations or environmental disease or disrespect for local fauna. Ethical tourism is geared towards encouraging both the consumer and industry to avoid participation in activities that contribute or support negative ethical issues;

**Ecotourism:** also known as ecological tourism, is a subset of sustainable tourism which focuses on ecology. Ecotourism tends to be encountered in destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions.

### Background Information

14 out of 20 top tourist countries are Developing Nations. For a third of them tourism is the main money earner and has helped them to develop and prosper. Yet, tourists often forget when they climb that sacred site to take a picture or tramp through that forest in search of endangered species that they are in the homes and backyards of others. Tourism can be a vital source of income for locals but it is also a daily nuisance and sometimes a necessary evil. With the growth of tourism many fragile coastal ecosystems are being destroyed by trampling feet, water drying up due to overuse and sacred lands or forests being destroyed to make way for tourist resorts and hotels. So, as these places we love to visit are being dragged downwards by the weight of greedy tourism, new kinds of traveling have been developed known as ethical tourism and ecotourism.

With almost 30% of the world’s untouched landscapes being lost in recent decades and literally trampled underfoot by eager tourists, responsible travel is featuring higher and higher on tourist

brochures and in the minds of ethical traveler. Ecotourism is an attempt to reduce the impact your vacation has on the environment, local people and community you visit. This means paying specific attention to the methods of transport you use, the hotel you stay in, the amount of water you use, the way you spend your money and the way you act towards the locals and customs of the country. WTO estimates that 20% of global tourism today is ethical tourism and it is growing three times as fast as the industry as a whole.

A brand-new role for consumers in the tourism market has emerged from three trends: first, there is a thirst for different and more “exciting” holidays; second, there is a growing realization of the negative impacts of tourism – its clod-hopping footprints in other people’s homes in the deserts, forests, seashores and mountains of the world; and, third, of course is climate change.

For tourism, climate change is not a remote event, but a phenomenon that already affects the sector and certain destinations in particular, mountain regions and coastal destinations among others. At the same time, the tourism sector is contributing to greenhouse gas emissions especially through the transport of tourists.

Changing climate and weather patterns at tourist destinations and tourist generating countries can significantly affect the tourists’ comfort and their travel decisions. Changing demand patterns and tourist flows will have impacts on tourism businesses and on host communities, as well as knock off effects on related sectors, such as agriculture, handicrafts or construction.

In small island states and developing countries, where tourism is a major economic activity, any significant reduction in tourist arrivals will have serious employment impacts and generate further poverty.

Tourism does not only affects climate or wealth, but also does so with cultural heritage. Natural and cultural heritage, diversities and living cultures are major tourism attractions. Excessive or poorly managed tourism and tourism-related development can threaten their physical nature, integrity and significant characteristics. The ecological setting, culture and lifestyle of host communities may also be degraded, along with the visitor’s experience of the place.

Tourism should bring benefits to host communities and provide an important means and motivation for them to care for and maintain their heritage and cultural practices. The involvement and co-operation of local and/or Indigenous community representatives, conservationists, tourist operators, property owners, policy makers, those preparing national development plans and site managers is necessary to achieve a sustainable tourism industry and enhance the protection of heritage resources for future generations.

### States Involved

According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), 83% of developing countries rely on ecotourism as a major export while others, such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nepal, Kenya, Madagascar and Antarctica, also rely on ecotourism as the major contributory factor in their gross domestic product and employment level calculations.

**Costa Rica:** has a well-established ecotourism market and voluntary ecotourism certification program. Most of the tourist attractions are nature and wildlife focused family ecotourism activities (e.g. bird watching, flora and fauna) that are run by local residents and by most criteria, the country has a decent environmental record except for some deforestation controversies;

**Ecuador:** has the fortunate distinction of being the easiest gateway to the Galapagos Islands, which are well known for their distinct wildlife. Along with a booming community based tourism trade, its highly regarded ecotourism certification program focuses on environmental education and tourist waste management though there are some issues with deforestation;

**Nepal:** although one of the poorest countries in the world, Nepal is a popular tourist destination known for trekking expeditions. While there are some governmental initiatives to add tourist attractions, there is no eco-certification program in place to distinguish ecotour operators nor many community based ecotourism programs to help with alleviating poverty;

**Kenya:** is in the middle of an image problem. It was showing increasing ecotourism gains with a thriving safari tourism industry until consumer concerns about pirate activities off the coast

of Somalia and other violence began to distribute tourists to other African countries. For its part, the Kenyan government has developed an ecotourism certification program, but some environmental issues including deforestation, soil erosion and degraded water quality need attention;

**Madagascar:** is labeled as one of the most unique places on earth for flora, fauna, culture, and food. But, its political situation results in consistent safety warnings for travelers. For its part, the government has developed a certification program to begin combating the environmental issues of deforestation and soil erosion.

As many countries and cities have adopted ecotourism practices, many others have been and still are damaged by tourism and disrespectful tourists, as for example: Angkor Wat (Cambodia), Machu Pichu (Peru), the Great Barrier Reef (Australia), Venice (Italy) and Cozumel (Mexico).

### UN Efforts

First of all it is necessary to underline how this topic has been and still is so deeply taken in consideration by the UN, which created an important specialized agency for the promotion of responsible and sustainable tourism, called " Ethics and Social responsibility Programme". UN World Tourism Organization established the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET), which is a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide key-players in tourism development. Addressed to the governments, the travel industry, communities and tourists alike, it aims to help maximizing the sector's benefits while minimizing its potentially negative impact on the environment, cultural heritage and societies across the globe.

GCET was adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization, and the United Nations two years later expressly encouraged UNWTO to promote the effective follow-up of its provisions. Although not legally binding, GCET features an implementation through its recognition of the central role of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE), to which stakeholders may refer matters concerning the application and interpretation of the document.

The Code's 10 principles amply cover the economic, social, cultural and environmental components of travel and tourism:

Article 1: Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies

Article 2: Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfillment

Article 3: Tourism, a factor of sustainable development

Article 4: Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement

Article 5: Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities

Article 6: Obligations of stakeholders in tourism development

Article 7: Right to tourism

Article 8: Liberty of tourist movements

Article 9: Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry

Article 10: Implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

In 2011, UNWTO formulated a Private Sector Commitment to the GCET, for the signature of private enterprises worldwide. In signing the commitment, companies pledge to uphold, promote and implement the values of responsible and sustainable tourism development championed by the Code. They further undertake to report on their implementation of the Code's principles in their corporate governance to the World Committee on Tourism Ethics.

A special focus on social, cultural and economic matters is one of the main objectives of the Commitment, which draws particular attention to issues such as human rights, social inclusion, gender equality, accessibility, and the protection of vulnerable groups and host communities.

As of June 2017, 521 companies and associations from around the world have signed the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics. These signatories include enterprises from Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong (China), Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, People's Republic of China, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, The Netherlands, The Philippines, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom and Uruguay as well as four regional associations from Latin America and Europe.

Moreover, concerning the impact of tourism on climate change, since the 1st International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism, convened by UNWTO in Djerba, Tunisia in 2003, a growing body of knowledge has been generated addressing the complex relationships between the tourism sector and climate change with important research activities on this subject.

There is now a wide recognition of the urgent need for tourism industry, national governments and international organizations to develop and implement strategies to face the changing climate conditions and to take preventive actions for future effects, as well as to reduce tourism's environmental impacts contributing to climate change. Furthermore, such strategies should take also into account the needs of developing countries in terms of poverty alleviation.

#### Possible Solutions

Obviously this topic is so huge, that could include many different small topics within it. Thanks to this briefly chair report we have tried to underline the importance of two different and urgent aspects involved in tourism: the risks and problems caused by climate change and the imminent damage of world cultural heritage. As we have just said, there are so many different aspects that should be considered in a resolution and which you should work on. So you could work and find solutions also about:

- accessible tourism to everybody (including young people and people with disabilities);
- gender equality in tourism;
- the improve of tourism as poverty alleviation;
- protection of children in tourism;
- respect and protection of native people and minorities in tourism sector.

Good Work Delegates

#### Useful links

<http://www2.unwto.org/programmes>

<http://ethics.unwto.org>

<http://ethics.unwto.org/content/list-ethics-events-theme>

<http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/accessible-tourism>

<http://ethics.unwto.org/content/gender-and-tourism>

<http://ethics.unwto.org/content/protection-children-tourism>

<http://greenloons.com/ecotourism-blog/introduction-to-ecotourism/ecotourism-101-which-countries-are-most-dependent-on-ecotourism-revenue.html>