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Director's Cut: Global Warming To Ecotourism



As official Media Sponsor we would like to congratulate the teams of TIES , UNEP, and Ecotourism Norway for a successful Global Ecotourism Conference in Oslo! Ecotourism now seems like a fresh graduate ready to save / take on / take part in the world, a world full of problems & opportunities. This fresh graduate must now choose whether (and how) s/he wants to change ‘society’ or to enter the ‘marketplace’. There are advantages and disadvantages in both choices but ideally Ecotourism should maintain its freshness, independence and principles so as to be able to make a difference, rather than simply being different. That said, Ecotourism is a broad and pluralistic movement and there are many paths to success. No one has a patent or exclusive right on Ecotourism, so the choice is yours. After all, in this humanistic movement, the focus is as much on the individual as it is on the environment. >> The Internet is truly great (and eco!), and yes there is

Skype, but good-old face to face meetings and hand shakes with good people are equally important in building and enhancing friendships. The greatest pleasure therefore was to meet so many friends and members including Eugenio Yunis (UNEP), Jane Crouch (Intrepid Travel, Australia), Ariane Janer (EcoBrasil), Peter Richards (REST, Thailand), Aivar Ruukel (Ecotourism Estonia), Gopinath Parayil (The Blue Yonder, India), Steven Schipani (Mekong Tourism Dev. Project, Laos), Anuruddha Bandara (Eco Team Sri Lanka), Todd Comen (Institute for Integrated Rural Tourism, USA), Johan Nyqvist (Nature's Best, Sweden), Pascal Languillon (Ecotourisme France) and Marcia Palanque. Leading Ecotourism decision-makers, academics & practitioners that I had the honour to meet included David Sollitt, the new Director of TIES and gracious co-host of the GEC, an interview with whom you can read on the next page, Stefanos Fotiou of UNEP, GEC co-host, who eloquently and pleasantly broke down complex issues into basics, Professor Martha Honey, immediate past president of TIES (now at CESD), Professor Kelly Bricker (Chair of TIES board of Directors), Professor Paul Eagles (U. of Waterloo), Mandip Singh Sooin (Ibex Expeditions), Zoltan Kun (Pan Parks), Alex Khajavi (Nature Air), heads of national ecotourism associations, and many more who may forgive me for not mentioning them. In Oslo, it was apparent that what usually goes by the pompous name of ‘Stakeholders’ is in the case of Ecotourism a bunch of affable, positive, individuals. Certainly, we can do even better in the next global conference, which will take place in 5 years. For example, it can take place in more ecological & economical surroundings so that it can be more inclusive, in terms of organisers & participants and more meaningful as a democratic forum that decides on important matters and declarations by direct vote. As technology improves, the conference can also be mirrored / complemented by a concurrent on-line conference. Of course, as Voltaire said, better is the enemy of good. So let's have a just as good conference! >> Back in Athens, last week, I was lucky to grab a ticket for Al Gore's speech (Athens being the cradle of Democracy it was a free ticket but you had to queue in the sun!) and admire “the man who used to be the next president of the United States”, tirelessly going on for 90 minutes covering large swaths of global warnings and at least a couple of kilometres walking on stage (thus offsetting his emissions) expertly delivering a PowerPoint presentation and political jokes / blows to former & future foes. Our domestic equivalents sitting in the first row were visibly impressed by the ‘exotic’ oratory techniques. Some started guessing that the speaker was preparing his political comeback, this time with DiCaprian aura, while a couple shouted/wished ‘run for president’. Most left convinced (or at least hypnotised) that global warming is indeed taking place, with our PM declaring that all elementary pupils will from now on be taught from Mr Gore's Book and DVD. Still, after the show, Athens also being the birthplace of cynic philosophy, a few wondered if they could fool the green Armageddon simply by composting lemon peels in their balcony, opting for pious Priuses, overpriced eco-friendly products & politicians. >> **Antonis B. Petropoulos** [More Director's Cut-](#)



<http://www.ecotourismlaos.com/forum2007>



GLOBAL ECOTOURISM CONFERENCE SPECIAL

An Interview with David Sollitt, the new Director of TIES

"MY TERM WILL HOPEFULLY BE SEEN AS ONE BASED ON INCREASED OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION"



David Sollitt joined The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) in February 2007 as the new Executive Director. With his extensive experience in regional, national and international marketing and communications as well as conservation background, Dave brings exciting and innovative solutions and opportunities to TIES and its network. After a 20-year career in international advertising in New York and Chicago, Dave and family moved west. With his own agency and consultancy in Jackson Hole, WY, Dave worked with such clients as Grand Teton Lodge Company, Vail Resorts, Rockefeller Holdings, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, Wyoming State Tourism, Marriott, and, most recently, TIES-member Papoose Creek Lodge in Cameron, MT. Dave also consulted for a variety of conservation organizations including Trout Unlimited, Deschutes River Conservancy, Yellowstone to Yukon and others. He holds a BS in Environmental Science from Arizona State University and a Masters in Communications from Northwestern University. He has enjoyed travelling to every continent except Antarctica and sailing extensively around the world.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) (Web: www.ecotourism.org) is a global network of industry practitioners, institutions and individuals helping to integrate environmental and socially responsible principles into practice, while promoting responsible travel that unites conservation and communities.

TIES promotes responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people by creating an international network of individuals, institutions and the tourism industry, educating tourists and tourism professionals and influencing the tourism industry, public institutions and donors to integrate the principles of ecotourism into their operations and policies.

TIES has an extensive Training and Education program that provides consulting Services, international training programs, distance learning courses, advocacy campaigns, UCFC program, conferences, public forums and publications.

(The Interview follows:)

ECOCLUB: *What made you assume the big ecotourism helm of The International Ecotourism Society? Did you bring with you a "100-day" plan for changes, or are you rather the consensus-seeking type?*

David Sollitt: I've always been passionate about conservation. My degree was in Environmental Science and at one time, I was set on being an environmental lawyer to save the planet. That was until I concluded communications was both my forte and an effective means of preserving our natural world. I worked in the private sector most of my career, and I feel strongly that conservation programs that integrate public and private partnerships and constituencies are the best way to ensure preservation of the world's last best places. Ecotourism provides perhaps the best model to demonstrate that wild places and biodiversity have both tangible and intangible value. Any thoughts for a 100 day plan were pretty much killed when I realised how much there was to do in my first 100 days, including Oslo, a major fundraiser, and board meeting. But there are plans in the works to dramatically improve our service to our members and our ability to serve the Ecotourism community. I am pleased to say my 100th day at TIES will be spent in Oslo, surrounded by the best and the brightest in global Ecotourism at the Global Ecotourism Conference, 2007.

ECOCLUB: *Do you view Ecotourism, as a tourism movement, or as a tourism niche?*


David Sollitt: Niches that reflect real, compelling human needs and values become movements. It's only a matter of size and critical mass. Ecotourism is one example of a niche that has become a movement.

 *ECOCLUB: Is Ecotourism certification a useful and feasible exercise?*

David Sollitt: Yes. For all the growth that ecotourism has enjoyed, it is still a young industry, encompassing both experiential and operational guidelines to legitimately deliver what we call Ecotourism. In a world where few people have the time and resources to fully research their travel choices, certification programs that are verifiable and measurable provide a very real service to both the traveller and the Ecotourism operators that indeed operate sustainably and responsibly.

 *ECOCLUB: Should Ecotourists care about human rights at a destination, or about not upsetting the local status-quo, leaving only footprints?*


David Sollitt: Ecotourism reminds us that we share this planet with a variety of peoples, communities as well as other life forms. People, especially Ecotourists, should care about human rights everywhere.

 *ECOCLUB: Some argue that most tourists who opt for an eco-holiday do not really feel accountable to the poor, the disenfranchised, or to the environment, during their 'hard-earned' holidays. They mainly choose an eco holiday by accident, on the grounds of price & novelty. Do you agree?*

David Sollitt: I don't think people choose an eco-holiday by accident. I think people plan their vacations based on a desired set of experiences. Most of those who wish to experience nature, wildlife and wild places want to know that their experiences aren't contributing to the destruction or degradation of those places and are ideally helping to preserve them.


I also believe that to be fully enriching, travel to faraway places encompasses interaction with the cultures and peoples that help define those places. To the extent that those cultures and peoples are poor or disenfranchised, it will have an impact on the experience of that place.

That said, I think many discover that true ecotourism practice can dramatically enhance that experience, but that discovery comes largely through the experience itself. Prior to going to TIES, I worked at Papoose Creek Lodge, an ecolodge in Cameron, MT. Many guests came to the lodge knowing we called it an ecolodge, but not truly knowing what that meant. In the course of their stay, they learned and experienced the things that the Lodge does to protect wildlife, the magnificent Madison Valley and the greater Yellowstone ecosystem and they told us repeatedly that knowledge dramatically enhanced their stay and made it a truly special experience. In the same way, knowing that your travel choice helps the people and the communities that made your vacation a unique and rewarding experience can only be an enhancement. Whether that results in a sense of accountability is hard to say, but Ecotourism has a unique capacity to transform guests into evangelists for the places they visit and the communities they interact with and we need to do a better job creating the vehicles to help them along the way.

 *ECOCLUB: Should Ecotourism become more mainstream, or should the mainstream become more Ecotourist? Or neither perhaps?*

David Sollitt: If becoming more "mainstream" means that Ecotourism practice would retreat from the principles of sustainability, preservation and the principles that we in the community hold dear, absolutely not. If it means that the marketing of true Ecotourism practice convinces a broader range of tourists that the experience of true Ecotourism is a richly rewarding experience, then absolutely.

The mainstream is becoming more Ecotourist. We are holding our North American Ecotourism Conference in Madison, Wisconsin in September. That State became the first in the US to promote, on a state-wide basis, the adoption of sustainable practices across their entire tourism industry. That can only be a good thing. We all have to be concerned with the state of our planet, so sustainable practices in all industries will have to play a role. Those in the Ecotourism community can be proud of the influence they have had in encouraging the mainstream tourism industry to adopt sound, sustainable practices.

 *ECOCLUB: Does carbon-offsetting by tourists have an effective role to play in combating climate-change, or is it mostly a gimmick by unregulated & unaccountable offsetting businesses?*

David Sollitt: To solve the climate change problem, we will all have to change the way we think, work and act. Carbon offsetting does a lot of positive things. It raises consciousness that individual choices matter. It provides a funding for a lot of very valuable sustainable energy development programs. It can provide an economic engine for reforestation and, eventually, preservation of old growth forests. The impact is relatively small presently, but that's because the number of people participating is relatively small. But it's growing dramatically and it's drawing increasingly larger participants. Remember recycling 30 years ago? Remember when that was the province of a small "fringe?" Today, it touches everyone. Reducing our carbon footprint will eventually touch everyone.

 *ECOCLUB: Do you see TIES as actively initiating or consulting for ecotourism projects, or should it rather keep its distances as an impartial observer, monitoring fair-play?*

David Sollitt: I'm a marketer by training and experience. As the oldest and largest organisation serving the Ecotourism community, it is important that we actively promote Ecotourism, our members, and the benefits of Ecotourism. That argues against a passive, arms length engagement.

For example, according to our web stats, we get an average of a million hits on our web site a month with a number of unduplicated visits that many private sector sites would envy. But our site isn't very good. Our site can and will become a much more active presence in the Ecotourism community.

With regards to specific projects, we will continue to stress training and education as a critical driver in the advancement of Ecotourism. There is an enormous wealth of knowledge and expertise in Ecotourism in our Staff, Board and membership. I bring a different set of skills and expertise that can enhance that knowledge and its dissemination and application.

 *ECOCLUB: If you were to give one promise to the world of Ecotourism, about something that would be achieved during your tenure at the helm of TIES, what would that be?*

David Sollitt: I think we became somewhat insular as an organisation in the past few years. This is a community and an industry – a term I use somewhat loosely – that is remarkably vibrant and passionate. My term will hopefully be seen as one based on increased outreach and collaboration and a rededication to the membership that is our greatest strength.

 *ECOCLUB: Finally what are the aims of the Global Ecotourism Conference, beyond the obvious goal of networking? Will there be another conference?*

David Sollitt: The Global Ecotourism Conference 2007 is a remarkable opportunity for the international Ecotourism community to take stock of where we are and what we've both accomplished and learned in the five years since the United Nations' International Year of Ecotourism. The breadth and depth of our speakers and presenters are remarkable. The geographic dispersion of our conference participants is impressive, and we're proud that conference participants integrate both on the ground operators and staff as well as ministers and other dignitaries. We and our partners have worked very hard to put together a conference agenda that meets the needs of Ecotourism professionals and practitioners from around the world to learn from each other's experience, to enhance the capacity to plan and manage Ecotourism operations in a more sustainable manner, and to strengthen the collective voice of the Ecotourism community.

A number of leading experts from various parts of the world will address critical issues, challenges and opportunities in the field of Ecotourism through workshops and plenary sessions. The workshops are crafted around the main themes of local sustainable development, nature conservation, communication and branding, and current trends. These workshops serve as forum to assess the achievements and challenges in the field of Ecotourism since the IYE, examine critical issues in Ecotourism today, discuss the way forward for the Ecotourism community, and develop action plans to reinforce and expand the process of fostering joint policies and approaches on key issues including biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation, and tourism industry reforms. Yes, there will be another conference. We believe it is critical that the international Ecotourism community convenes every few years to assess our accomplishments and challenges. TIES, in partnership with a national or regional Ecotourism association, will be organising a Global Ecotourism Conference at least every five years starting in 2007, in the co-organizer's country.

 *ECOCLUB: Thank you very much*



THE ECOCLUB INTERVIEW

CAROL PATTERSON


“Governments need to lead with policies and incentives to green our business practices and our lifestyles.”

Carol Patterson is well known as a tourism industry consultant, speaker and author. Carol is the author of the book, *The Business of Ecotourism* that offers business guidance for individuals, companies and organizations involved in the nature tourism industry. She is also a coauthor on *The Business of EcoTourism Development and Management*, a book on ecotourism business planning used by The Nature Conservancy in their tourism projects in Latin America. Carol also co wrote *Saving Paradise: The Story of Sukau Rainforest Lodge* with Albert Teo, founder of Borneo EcoTours. Carol has degrees in Business Administration, Economics and Geography, and holds a Certified Management Accountant Designation. In 1991 she was named Merit Winner in the Pannel Kerr Forster Research Award competition. Carol is a private pilot and operated the Calgary Zoo’s very popular Flying Zoo program in the late 1980s. She teaches recreation and tourism geography classes for the University of Calgary and her humorous but practical presentation style means she is in great demand as a speaker for tourism conferences and workshops.



Her company, Kalahari Management Inc., provides assistance in assessments, strategic planning, feasibility studies and capacity building for the tourism industry. It publishes a quarterly newsletter *EcoTourism Management* that furnishes practical information on tourism issues and best practices. Kalahari Management has worked with numerous organizations and communities on developing nature tourism businesses. Recent projects have included a strategic plan for the Canadian Badlands, business development activities for north Atlantic nature tourism operators, creation of funding criteria for aboriginal business, and marketing strategies for bird-watching and nature tourism corridors. Selected studies are available for viewing on Kalahari Management website at www.kalahari-online.com

The Interview follows:

 **ECOCLUB:** *You are a leading ecotourism consultant. What attracted you to Ecotourism in the first place and how has Ecotourism evolved since?*

Carol Patterson: Ecotourism attracted me because of its potential to combine several of my passions – experiences in nature, wildlife conservation and business development. I started my business in 1991 when few people had even heard of the term and much of the ecotourism development was occurring in east and south Africa or Latin America. In the years since then, I’ve noticed a **growing awareness amongst consumers** about the concept (although we still have a long way to go) and much more ecotourism development in all world regions.

 **ECOCLUB:** *Do you believe in Ecotourism certification? Science or greenwash?*

Carol Patterson: Ecotourism certification is something I have mixed feelings about. I want to see more ecotourism businesses and ensure that there is integrity when people say they are using ecotourism principles and practices. **Unfortunately, certification programs are expensive, often under-funded by government, and not widely recognized by travellers.** There is also an explosion in the number of programs which dilutes the brand recognition for consumers.


Whether it is science of greenwash, I’m not sure it is either. Science is only part of a good certification programs and there are certainly many cases of people misusing the eco label, but having a certification program is neither a guarantee of quality ecotourism nor the only way to achieve it. I think that training tourism businesses in the principles and best practices of ecotourism is extremely important in growing this industry.

 *ECOCLUB: Is there such a thing as a 'luxury ecolodge'?*

Carol Patterson: I certainly **hope so!** We can't equate sustainability with suffering especially in leisure travel. I think one of the problems ecotourism businesses face in destinations like North America, is that potential **customers hesitate to purchase trips because they think they the ecotourism facilities will be too rugged** or the trip unpleasant. Few people like to suffer on their holidays so I think facilities with some extra amenities are important to ecolodge success. We may have to redefine luxury for people so they understand that while they may not have air-conditioning they will have a cool room due to the building design and be very comfortable. Ecolodge luxury often comes from the rare experiences they offer and we need to promote that.

 *ECOCLUB: Do / should Ecotourists really care about human rights?*

Carol Patterson: Is there anyone who doesn't care about human rights? I doubt it. However **it is difficult** to equate your travel choice with human rights or to know if you are making an informed decision. I think ecotourism organisations can share information on human rights and let people make a choice that is consistent with their values. There are tradeoffs to be made in every decision.

 *ECOCLUB: Have you found it more beneficial & practical, as an ecotourism consultant, to work with communities, or with small businesses?*

Carol Patterson: **Communities are made up of small businesses** so they are not mutually exclusive. However, it is very difficult for one ecotourism business to succeed in isolation. I find the most successful projects occur when a wide cross-section of tourism businesses and government agencies come together to develop a tourism destination. It creates the critical mass needed to reach profitability in a reasonable period of time. Economic viability is critical if conservation objectives are to be met through ecotourism.

 *ECOCLUB: If you were to choose one of your many projects as an ideal showcase for ecotourism, which one would it be and why?*

Carol Patterson: It would be a project I did for several **communities in west central Nevada** a couple of years ago. Nevada is more often associated with gamblers than bird watching but that is changing. Rick Gray of the Fallon Convention and Tourism Authority saw the opportunity in nature-based tourism and was able to secure funding for a project to develop tourism products and marketing strategies for bird watchers. It had all the elements I like to see in a project. It involved people from many levels of government, conservation groups like the Lahonta Audubon Society, established tourism businesses and some very dedicated community volunteers. I worked with Bob Barnes and Bob Garrison of Nature Tourism Planning on the project and we were able to identify some great new tourism experiences and practical marketing suggestions, some of which increased visitation for local businesses even before the project was finished. The study was awarded a Tourism Excellence award by the Nevada Commission on Tourism and is being used as template for small communities in other parts of the state.

 *ECOCLUB: What is your view on the many wanabe 'tourisms' that - unsuccessfully - aim to replace Ecotourism? Do labels matter?*

Carol Patterson: I'm **not aware of any 'wanabe's' trying to replace ecotourism.** There are related forms of tourism such as sustainable tourism or green tourism but I see them as complementary facets. I'm in favour of any form of tourism that gets people thinking about the global community and reducing their environmental impact. I think we need to be more concerned with outputs than labels.

 *ECOCLUB: Ecotourism starts at home. What is the main problem facing tourism & the environment in your native Alberta, and what would be the solution?*

Carol Patterson: I am living in a place experiencing the equivalent of the California gold rush in terms of prosperity and rapid growth. People and investment money are flocking to Alberta to take advantage of the energy boom at an astounding rate. There is an abundance of disposable income for travel but little time to take a trip. There is full employment so help wanted signs dot the windows of almost every hospitality business, and several profitable businesses have closed their doors due to their inability to find staff. Homelessness is growing and almost half of homeless people have jobs! So attracting seasonal staff can mean finding them a place for them to live on top of training them. The government is very focused on responding to this growth and tourism is not receiving sufficient attention. The energy industry still receives priority in development decisions and there are many people who disagree with the policy of multi-use in many of our protected areas. **Hiking in a natural area with a gas plant over the next ridge is not everyone's idea of a day in the woods.** I would like to see the government make tourism a higher priority. The creation of the Alberta Badlands destination and funding for rural development is a great example of how the government can facilitate rural development and preservation through tourism. Continued funding for this project and others like it would be something I would support.

 *ECOCLUB: The 3rd, revised, edition of your book, "The Business of Ecotourism" is now available. What revisions does it include and why?*

Carol Patterson: The most important revision to the new book is **a section devoted exclusively to helping people find careers** in the field of nature tourism. The cover story on this month's Outside magazine features 37 dream jobs encouraging people to turn their passion into a pay cheque. They provide some great profiles. The Business of Ecotourism gives people specific tools and tips on how to find those jobs or self-employment opportunities. I am frequently approached by people who want to do what I do or have the freedom and excitement found in nature tourism work. I thought it was time to share the techniques I've used and which will work for other people. I'm also working on a series of online training courses to complement the book so people can continue to develop their careers and businesses so there are even more people working to make the planet a better place through travel. If people are interested in learning more about the book they should go to www.trafford.com/07-0096

 *ECOCLUB: So do you believe Ecotourism is more of a business or of a philosophy?*

Carol Patterson: **I think it is a philosophy.** You don't have to label something ecotourism to adopt the principles and practices. I have not met one person who is against the environment yet we have huge environmental problems. I think we have to get past the words to actions. **Governments need to lead with policies and incentives to green our business practices and our lifestyles.** I hope my work contributes to that leadership by demonstrating that good environmental practices equals good business, not precludes it.

 *ECOCLUB: Thank you very much*

VIEWPOINT

“Defining & Uniting The Global Ecotourism Movement Through Improved Communication”

by Antonis B. Petropoulos, Director, ECOCLUB®

(based on presentation given at the Global Ecotourism Conference)

“I don't want to change my lifestyle – I want to change my life” I recently came across this phrase in a blog. It succinctly summarised why many people, me included, were first attracted to Ecotourism. Not to change our lifestyles but our lives and maybe the lives of others. When we ‘market’ / promote Ecotourism, we have to grasp the full meaning of the above statement. We are not trying to ‘sell’ something to gullible consumers, but to engage & unite intelligent and considerate citizens who are looking for change in their life and the world.

We are not really *selling* anything but providing a social service. We are certainly not selling a product like organic coffee, to a fashion-conscious, mainstream audience. There is no argument that we must still inform the general public large sections of which have still not heard about Ecotourism, however we must focus our efforts on those who have already heard about Ecotourism and are keen on practicing it. On the supply side also, we need to give priority in communicating with, informing and assisting those who are really sincere about Ecotourism, those who practice Ecotourism, and those who risk their lives even, protecting communities and the environment through tourism in some of the world's last great but also dangerous places.

Let the mainstream come to us, rather than us move to the mainstream. The unity and strength of the Ecotourism movement should never be sacrificed in favour of greater numbers, on in the altar of greater profits, as this can only lead to unwanted dependencies. At the same time, we must remain close to the people, to be affordable and inclusive, not exclusive or elitist.

Thus, rather than, or at least in addition to, the three p's of Marketing “Price, Product, Place” Ecotourism advocates must also think in terms of Policy, Partnership, People and Power, and of course in terms of the big E, Earth.

(a). Defining the Ecotourism Movement

Defining Ecotourism in a manner agreeable to all, is as impossible, and unnecessary as is for example, defining Democracy. Ecotourism is a movement which combines Ecology & Tourism, it is neither a mainstream nor niche, it is more coherent than other tourism movements, it stands for ecology & economy rather than for ecology & luxury, it is progressive rather than conservative, more of a social service than an industry product, dealing with citizens rather than stakeholders and a philosophy more than a business. Who is eligible to participate? Everyone who shows interest. Who is eligible to decide? Everyone who shows commitment. Decisions should always be taken on the ‘one person one vote’ basis rather than the ‘one dollar one vote’ basis. We should be clear about this, no special interests! Ecotourism is with the small guys and galls so it should be a level-playing field. Still ecotourism majorities should not in any way oppress ecotourism minorities.

(b). Defending the Ecotourism Movement

There is no such thing as bad publicity, however, I am sick and tired with assorted cynics attacking or being ironic about Ecotourism. I have so far sent a dozen letters to the editor of major newspapers, and they get published, which is useful, but this is not enough, we need coordinated action. I am inclined to believe that some are selectively mean with Ecotourism, compared with other 'Tourisms'. The real reason is that they are jealous about the practical success & application of Ecotourism, which they all too readily dismiss as a 'buzzword'. You see, 2002 was the International Year of Ecotourism, not of any other Tourism. On the one corner are those developers who would rather use us to reach the parts they can not reach, as a trojan horse. On the other corner, you all remember the hysteric attempt by some extremists to cancel the International year of Ecotourism. Those who unfairly dismiss Ecotourism as the human or ecological face of 'hedonistic neo-colonialism'. So, we are between a rock and a hard place. But few realise that damage is also done when one of us unwittingly gives an interview, or writes an article, and their comments are taken out of context and turned around to hit Ecotourism. So when we talk to outsiders we should always make clear that Ecotourism is the ideal, towards which we are working but we still have not achieved in this imperfect world. Ecotourism is like politics, the art of the possible, it deals with humans and human interaction and not with factory machines, so it is difficult to certify in a meaningful manner. Persistent as well as opportunistic attackers of Ecotourism, should understand that there is a credibility price to pay when they abuse Ecotourism and in the time of the Internet, they can no longer hide.

(c). Improving Communication

"Ecotourism: Others Hear, We Listen"

"Ecotourism: Others Look: We See"

Good communication should exist at all levels, the movement level, between associations & networks, between businesses and between individuals, in both directions, inward and outward, internal & external. Communication is bi-directional and has the role both of interpreting the Ecotourism movement to the world, and the world to the Ecotourism movement. The dilemmas presented on the screen are valid, however in practice we have to be doing a bit of both. For example, if you are certain about an issue, you may lead, if you are uncertain, let the others lead. And we should not be too certain, or rush to defend ourselves through untested concepts such as certification and carbon-offsets: As Voltaire noted, uncertainty is tiresome but certainty is ridiculous.

What makes Ecotourism advocates better, and can make them even better, is a combination of principles, professionalism, intelligence and an open mind. Ecotourism and participatory democracy go hand in hand.

(d). Conclusion - Seven Recommendations for Ecotourism Unity & Strength

Sweeping do's and dont's are mostly naive, as they ignore situational, geographic and cultural peculiarities. I prefer specific recommendations, so here are seven of these, seven being a magic number in many cultures.

1. We must agree on one, concise, common, Ecotourism long-term goal: to make all Tourism ecological.
2. We should make clear on every occasion that Ecotourism is a broad movement, not a business niche.
3. We should consider setting up a body/workgroup to monitor attacks on Ecotourism, and respond in a timely, appropriate & professional manner.
4. We should preserve the Ecotourism movement's independence & financial independence by relying on individual ecotourism practitioners & enthusiasts rather than on governments, multinationals, aid agencies & benefactors with other agendas. Ecotourism belongs to Ecotourists & Ecotourism practitioners!
5. We should introduce online meetings for the purpose of achieving consensus on important and controversial issues, so as to strengthen the Ecotourism movement through direct democracy, transparency & knowledge diffusion.
6. Ecotourism associations should not compete with their own members for the provision of tourism services & products but instead lobby for our common ideals and promote change through appropriate national & international legislation & self-regulation.
7. Self-criticism is useful, however when talking to the press, or in public, we should use the word Ecotourism sparingly, substituting it with Tourism, unless we have something very positive to say about Ecotourism, our Movement!

The ECOCLUB.com Ecotourism Awards - 2007

ECOCLUB.com Ecotourism Awards 2007: Candidate Projects Announced & Open for Examination

As part of the annual ECOCLUB.com Ecotourism Awards, the nine finalists of the 2007 awards have been announced and [posted online](#) and are now open for review by the public. The awards aim to fund with a total of Euros 3,000 (approx USD 4,000) three projects which in the view of ECOCLUB [Members](#) best implement one or more of the following Ecotourism principles of ECOCLUB® the International Ecotourism Club™:

1. minimise the environmental impact of tourism
2. fund environmental conservation
3. promote equality & reduce poverty in the local community
4. increase environmental & cultural knowledge and intercultural understanding
5. be affordable & open to all

A 'Question Time' period will last from June 7 to June 21, 2007 during which Members of ECOCLUB may post public questions to the Award Candidates, who may answer until June 21. Questioning will then stop and will be followed by voting: the three winners will be determined in a democratic fashion, by an online vote by all Members of ECOCLUB, who will choose among submitted projects, between June 22 & June 29, 2007. The winners will be officially announced on July 1, 2007, the 8th anniversary of ECOCLUB®. The implementation of the winning projects will be then covered online at www.ecoclub.com as it happens.

The nine candidate projects are as follows:

A - Puri Lumbung Cottages: [Eco-attraction / water conservation project - Bali, Indonesia](#)

Creation of an eco-attraction in north Bali, to protect the diminishing water supply and raise awareness. We will plant 1 hectare with organic Arabica coffee and endangered trees

B - Candomba Servicos Turisticos: [Community Ping-Pong Tables - Brazil](#)

Construction of two ping-pong tables made out of concrete, in the central square of the rural village called Caeté-Açu, in the countryside of the state of Bahia.

C - Eco Hotel Uxlabil Atitlan: [Painting classes for village youngsters - Guatemala](#)

Preserving & reinforcing the tradition of primitivistic painting of the Maya tzutuhils in Lake Atitlán, Guatemala. 50 youngsters from San Juan La Laguna will be trained for three months.

D - Carpe Diem Travel Limited: [Plastic bag recycling microenterprise - Cambodia](#)

Creation of a microenterprise in Cambodia to collect and recycle discarded plastic bags by making them into a range of different products.

E - 3 Rivers Eco Lodge & Sustainable Living Centre: [Educational Organic School Garden - Dominica](#)

Creation of an organic educational garden in the village school. The produce from the garden will be sold in the village providing critical funding / education for the school.

F - La Selva Jungle Lodge: [Pig farm for wildlife protection - Ecuador](#)

The difficult to balance carrying capacity of the lodge and the equally difficult genetic desires of our local indigenous to hunt fresh meat all come together in a pig farm.

G - Rwanda Eco-tours Agency: [Turning gorilla poachers to farmers - Rwanda](#)

Creating an alternative means to local people around gorillas' national park with an alternative livelihood that will absent them from poaching of wildlife and degradation of mountain gorilla habitat.

H - The Lodge at Big Falls: [Developing signage for protected area - Belize](#)

By installing improved signage in the communities surrounding the Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary, the Aguacaliente Management Team will encourage sustainable tourism, providing indigenous community members with alternative income sources.

I - Malaika Ecotourism Limited: [Tree nursery in Primary School - Kenya](#)

Creation of a tree nursery plantation in Mago Primary School. This project will bring back understanding of the environmental management in the community, to stop the pollution of the area.

For more details and to review the candidate projects, please go to the [ECOCLUB.com Ecotourism Awards 2007 Forum](#)

ECO PAEDEIA

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals through Tourism

by Professor Lawal Mohammed Marafa*

Abstract

When the millennium development goals (MDGs) were articulated and presented on the eve of the millennium, tourism as an industry was not explicitly mentioned. But over the years it became clear that tourism, a multifaceted industry and one that is now used by many countries for poverty alleviation and economic development and can contribute immensely in pursuing the goals set at the millennium summit. This paper therefore discusses and highlights the role of tourism in achieving the MDGs. Examples of African and Asian context are drawn especially China to underline the fact that MDGs 1 and 7 can be directly supported by specific tourism policies while MDGs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 can be indirectly supported by tourism. MDG 8 can constitute a bridge that can bring about success in any framework of implementation. But these framework however, vary in priority from place to place.

Introduction

When the millennium development goals (MDGs) were proposed on the eve of the new millennium, tourism as an industry was not explicitly mentioned. Over the years, it became clear that it has a role to play in helping to achieve some or all of the MDGs identified. Increasingly, it is being recognized that the potential impact of tourism in reducing poverty is significant (Brohman, 1996; Ashley *et al.*, 2000). Therefore it is now widely acknowledged that if tourism development is planned and implemented properly, it could be used as an effective tool for poverty reduction (Torres and Momse 2004) and thus achieving other MDGs.

In contemporary development discussion, poverty has assumed centre stage. Dating back to 1970s, the international community has identified poverty as one of the most important aspect of third world development (Britton, 1982; Carter, 1987, Joppe, 1996). Consequently, when world leaders gathered on the eve of the millennium to debate the plight of the world poor, they made a moral declaration that resulted into *the MDGs*. The MDGs are eight in number but are made up of many indicators and targets. Success in achieving the goals is hinged on the fact that many sectors are incorporated and interrelated. In order to underscore the importance of poverty in the process of third world development it is listed as number one in the priority order of the MDGs.

When carefully studied and analyzed, there is enormous potential for the application of the tourism industry into the campaigns and processes in achieving the MDGs. This was made clear at the review summit of the MDGs in 2005 at the UN. At that meeting, tourism was called upon to take its place in national development plans to help achieve the targets set (World Bank, 2002). In overall national economic development, tourism cannot be ignored as it already constitutes over 5% of GDP and over 10% of exports in about 41 of the 50 poorest countries according to the UNWTO. Tourism indeed plays a major part in the economy of poor countries. In 2001, international tourism receipts accruing to developing countries amounted to US\$142,306 million. Indeed, tourism is the principal export in a third of all developing countries and, amongst the 49 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), it is the primary source of foreign exchange earnings (Yunis, 2004).

In fact, the role of tourism in development in many countries has aroused considerably in the last three decades. Considering the fact that tourism is now playing an important role in a number of developing countries, international development agencies are getting more involved and increasing their commitments with aids and grants for tourism development purposes.

Consequently, the tourism industry makes important contributions to the economies of developing countries, particularly to foreign exchange earnings, employment, and overall GDP. Since tourism is seen as partly a panacea for poverty alleviation and eradication, the question is: how can tourism help the rural and the poor people? How can policies for tourism development benefit the poor? Given that tourism is already a fact of life for many of the world's poor, the challenge is to enhance the many positive impacts and reduce costs to the poor and their environment. This will help achieve the MDG 1 and set the stage for the realization of the other millennium goals.

Understanding the logical currency of this notion, this paper discusses and highlights the role of tourism in achieving the MDGs. To this end, examples of programmes and themes will be drawn from Africa and Asia where is the home to most of the worlds poorest people. Although Africa was the only continent identified by name when the MDGs were created, discussions on the role of tourism in national economies and rural areas can be universally relevant. Critical analysis of the MDGs will be made to identify those goals that can fit into tourism in both planning and development framework. This is finally intended to generate academic discussion that will put tourism and the MDGs in context.

Tourism and Development

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries generating an estimated 11% of global GDP, employing over 200 million people and transporting nearly 700 million travellers per year – a figure that is expected to double by 2020. The question is how can we use this to the benefit of the third world economies? How can we manage and utilize its potential?

Although tourism is not new to development discourse (Jenkins, 1982; Hosni, 2000), revamped tourism or alternative tourism like ecotourism, cultural tourism or any niche tourism are gradually becoming the core of tourism development for many Third World nation's economic development strategies (Tosun, 2005). Where such tourism is incorporated into development policies, it is known to promote economic growth and generate employment (Inskeep, 1991), encourage community participation and help in biodiversity conservation (Kiss, 2004), enhance rural development, environmental restoration, coastal protection, cultural heritage preservation, etc. (Elliot and Mann, 2005). Given the importance and relevance of this trend, nearly every developing country is now promoting some brand of tourism, tied to its development (See Table 1).

Underlining the importance of tourism in development, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and other international development agencies like World Bank, Regional Banks, IDB, UNEP etc. are identifying tourism related projects and funding them appropriately. For example, international lending and aid agencies are using tourism projects to promote sustainable rural development, increase local income generation, conserve biodiversity and improve indigenous knowledge, build infrastructure and institute capacity building (Elliot and Mann, 2005).

Coming from the dissatisfaction with the trend of mass tourism and growing environmental concern, coupled with increasing third world debt in the 1970s, international lending institutes like UNEP, IDB, DAS, USAID rekindled their commitments and took a stride and further identified tourism as a development tool and conservation strategy.

Regarding the perils of third world countries, in international development discussions, most of the agencies that show concern for development have all addressed poverty eradication as one of the most compelling challenges of the 21st century. This also means concern for income disparity, healthcare, etc. As discussions on the role of tourism in addressing poverty became prevalent in various international fora, its potential use became imminent. This recognition came to the fore when the UNWTO introduced the "Sustainable Tourism for the Elimination of Poverty" (STEP) framework which clearly links tourism development with poverty eradication making it a step towards achieving the MDG1. In this context, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, the UNWTO took a global lead in the field of poverty reduction through tourism, launching the concept of "sustainable tourism as an effective tool for eliminating poverty" (STEP). This initiative links the longstanding UNWTO pursuit of sustainable tourism with the United Nations leadership on poverty alleviation. Consequently, STEP may be seen as a response by the global tourism industry under the leadership of UNWTO to the United Nations goal to halve extreme poverty by 2015.

Significantly though, it was earlier at the 1999 meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development that urged governments to: "maximize the potential of tourism for eradicating poverty by developing appropriate strategies in cooperation with all major groups, indigenous and local communities." Tourism indeed flourishes where there is an abundance of natural and cultural resources. In the real sense, resources (both natural and cultural) upon which tourism products appear and flourish belong to the poor. It is therefore clear, that if tourism development is planned and implemented properly, it could be used as an effective tool for poverty alleviation and eradication. Already, tourism is a fact of life for many of the World's poor.

Accepting the notion that tourism resource, both cultural and natural are mostly located where the poor are, it became imperative that tourism projects and investments should be in such a way that will benefit the local community. Projects can be created that will uplift the livelihood of the local community and generate additional income thus partially achieving MDG1. A reduction in world poverty is an internationally agreed priority and targets have been set to halve poverty by the year 2015. Achieving poverty reduction requires actions on a variety of complimentary fronts and scales and tourism, an industry that is multifaceted and comparatively labour intensive can make adequate contribution in achieving this goal.

While increase in income and economic well being can be directly attributable to tourism policies, the quality of life and the intangible environmental ambience highlighted by tourism can result in the overall community empowerment. This is because the product that tourism packages and sells ultimately relies on clean seas, pristine mountain slopes, unpolluted water, litter-free streets, well-preserved buildings and archaeological sites, and diverse cultural traditions all of which the community can have a controlling stake (Honey, 1999).

Depending on the location and focus of tourism industry, different segments and types of tourism can have substantially different impacts on the local community. Limited evidence suggests that domestic/regional tourism and independent travel can create proportionately more local economic opportunities (Wang and Wall, 2007) than international packaged tourism.

Table 1: Notable choice of countries offering ecotourism products

<i>Africa</i>
Senegal
Namibia
Madagascar
Uganda
Zimbabwe
Kenya
South Africa, etc.
<i>Asia</i>
Vietnam
Cambodia
Bhutan
Malaysia
Thailand
China, etc.
<i>Latin America</i>
Costa Rica
Dominica
Bolivia
Belize
Ecuador
Brazil, etc.

Although most tourism ventures can be geared towards benefiting the local economy, recent trends and examples have singled out ecotourism, community-based tourism, etc as those that have the potential for maximizing benefits to the poor (Kiss, 2004). These collectively are what I term “new wave” tourism. Where new wave tourism is articulated and set for implementation, it has the capacity to do one or all of the following:

- Proceeds from such tourism activities can be used to fund conservation, environmental protection, research and various forms of capacity building for which the local community can benefit.
- New wave tourism has the capacity to provide direct financial benefits (sells) and empowerment for local people.
- The local community when involved tends to benefit not only financially but in other tangible facets (like portable water, roads, health clinics, etc) as well as intangible aspects like preservation of culture, etc.

Analyzing the specific role of tourism in achieving the MDGs

Conceptually, the eight MDGs (see Box 1) can be divided into categories that can be supported by the tourism industry. While MDGs 1 and 7 can be directly supported by specific tourism policies, MDGs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 can be indirectly supported by tourism and MDG 8 can constitute a bridge that can bring about success in any framework of implementation. But as these goals, targets and indicators are many and can vary in priority from place to place, an understanding of generic format by which tourism can be utilized is necessary.

Box 1 The MDGs

- MDG 1 Eradicate poverty
- MDG 2 Achieve universal primary education
- MDG 3 Promote gender equality
- MDG 4 Reduce child mortality
- MDG 5 Improve maternal health
- MDG 6 Combat HIV/AIDS and other diseases
- MDG 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
- MDG 8 Develop global partnership for development

Many people attest to the need of the MDGs to poverty eradication and general development issues confronting the third world countries in Africa, Asia and South America. Although the framework for articulation and need for achieving the MDGs by 2015 has gained currency all over the world, it is significantly more important to Africa and Asian countries where about 70% of the population is rural and underdeveloped (World Bank, 2002). While progress is being recorded in some Asian countries (like China and Thailand), such

progress in Africa is far from being satisfactory given that it was the only continent that was explicitly mentioned at the millennium declaration and subsequently where poverty is discussed. Comparatively, China has recorded successes in poverty alleviation that can be emulated. The percentage of people living on \$1/day fell from 53% in 1980 to 8% in 2002. As a result of this, an estimated 300 million people have been lifted out of poverty giving great impetus to the global effort in poverty reduction (Malik, 2005).

Although tourism as an industry cannot be said to be the major sector for this achievement, the contribution it has made are laudable. For instance, domestic tourism, domestic consumption and the like have been enhanced through rural tourism development which has become a new growth sector in China. This tourism theme together with agricultural tourism has the capacity to create over 350,000 new jobs every year, according to officials of the China National Tourism Administration.

The case of Africa is unique and deserves specific mention. While Africa has been disadvantaged by global trade, particularly in manufacturing, exports and imports and services, etc., tourism accounted for over 11% of total Africa exports by 2003 (Ashley and Mitchell 2005). With many governments realizing the positive nature of tourism to the economy, commitment to tourism is increasing and tourism itself is growing. Tourism indeed is labour intensive as compared to other non-agricultural sectors that are likely to take a population out of poverty. In addition, tourism is generally an additional diversification for the poor and not a substitute for their core activities particularly in rural Africa (Ashley *et al.* 2000). Given that this is the case, successful tourism policies can therefore add value and improve the quality of life of the local poor community. The notion of quality of life will tend to amalgamate all the positive aspects that achieving the MDGs will portend.

When the advantages of tourism in relation to MDGs are considered, it is an industry that is multifaceted and capable of bringing together many stakeholders. For instance whether or not tourism is specifically designed to help the poor or not, a number of products could be sourced locally, making the local community part of the production and retail process (Wisansing, 2005). The range of such products can include: local textiles; hand-made crafts of paper, wood, clay, etc.; Others include food and agricultural products like fruits, vegetables, flowers, beverages, food additives, snack foods, sweet/deserts, cosmetics, etc. (Torres and Momsen, 2004). Indeed, local products can be both tangible and intangible leaving the tourists with positive experiences to linger when it is well done.

Wherever tourism flourishes and become successful, it can generate partnerships (MDG 8) in establishing positive development framework for a given destination. As a source of employment, entry into the industry can be at any level making it a sector with low barriers. In many sectors of tourism, it has a high female employment ratio (MDG 3) varying from 2% to over 80% in different countries. Worldwide, women make up to 46% of the tourism labour, a fact first alluded to by Grown and Sebstad in 1989, making it a sector that can strategically be used in the direct pursuit of MDG3.

Added to this, creating partnerships (MDG8) with different interests and the role of gender in most economies can indirectly impact on education (MDG 2), while success in policies aimed at women can have a positive effect on MDGs 4, 5 and 6. As most primary tourism attractions are generically referred to as natural, cultural, including built and modified environments, policies promoting tourism can balance economy with people, culture and environment. To do this effectively depends on government's commitment and leadership that is responsible to the development and quality of life of the local population.

Already in the tourism industry, there is a general interest in sustainable tourism, ecotourism, responsible tourism, and the like that are collectively referred to as alternative tourism and here suggesting to categorise further as 'new wave tourism'. Where such trends and development frameworks become exploratory attracting huge investments, it indeed creates a 'new wave' of tourism sector. Thus, this 'new wave' can be promoted with the understanding that tourism activities should not deplete the environmental and cultural base upon which it depends, a theme that resonates well with MDG 7. This theme is already attracting the interest of major international agencies like IUCN, WWF, etc. effectively implementing the target of MDG8.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that tourism has important potential to contribute to the economic growth and development of third world countries. If this assertion is to be agreed upon, then it also has the potential to contribute to the MDGs. For this to be the case there has to be more commitment by governments, proponents of tourism sector, major stakeholders, academics etc., to study and unravel the benefits that tourism can bring to the local community for application. Such concerted efforts are needed to create tourism data that will be used to identify, quantify and analyze costs and benefits of tourism ventures accruing to the local community.

Enhancing tourism's legitimacy in poverty reduction strategies is dependent on host countries policies and development agencies placing a greater emphasis on the monitoring and analysis of its true costs and benefits. The challenge is to enhance the many positive impacts it can have and reduce the costs it can place on the poor community.

In discussing poverty, sustainable development and attempting to meet the MDGs by the year 2015, each government can make the choice to encourage investment, facilitate innovation, create job opportunities, and guarantee respect for local environments, cultures and social well-being of its people. Tourism as a holistic and multifaceted industry can be used to facilitate these especially where knowledge of best practices and successes are shared and managed for the benefit of a destination. Where investment is encouraged and facilitated, the private sector can be deployed as a driver of sustainable development and as a contributor to quality of life of the people and cultures that it touches. These can be measured in quantifying the achievements of tourism in pursuit of the MDGs.

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AROUND THE ECO WORLD

Africa

Kenya: Ecotourism Kenya holds specialist eco-seminars

The national body for ecotourism in Kenya, Ecotourism Kenya (Web: www.ecotourismkenya.org), held various workshops during the months of April and May, aimed at increasing the sustainability of tourism enterprises. Four workshops were held on the themes of Energy & Water Efficiency, Ecotourism Business Practices and Eco-rating. *Energy & Water Efficiency Training:* The Energy & Water Efficiency Training workshop mainly targeted managers and technicians of hotels, lodges and camps that aspired to improve their energy and water management systems. The two speakers, Leo J. Blyth, (the founder and managing director of SolaPak Ltd) and Sarah de Mowbray, (a water and sanitation engineer and the director of Green Water Environmental, Water & Sanitation Systems), discussed waste water treatment systems and solar power in terms of costs, benefits and opportunities. *Ecotourism Business Workshops:* Two Ecotourism Business workshops (one national and one regional) explored ideas for tourism involvement and introduced steps for sound tourism development planning. Participants from various national Community Based Tourism (CBT) initiatives were trained on the desirable elements of a successful tourism business. One of the themes emerging was that the participants were involved in doing business without understanding issues of advance bookings, without utilising local channels for their products, services and activities. *Eco-Rating workshop:* Representatives from many of the main hotel-chains in Kenya attended the Eco-rating workshop. The executive director of Ecotourism Kenya introduced their own Eco-Rating certification scheme, that evaluates efforts of tourist accommodation facilities in the areas of waste management, conservation, engagement with local communities and education of tourists. Turtle Bay Beach Club (a Silver Eco-rated facility) was presented as an ecocertification case study, having its own wastewater treatment plant, supporting turtle conservation, involving guests, school children and locals in tree planting and beach clean up activities and having weekly eco-policy meetings. Participants also toured the case study area in order to see practical implementations of these measures.

Americas

Canada: New Canadian cruise legislation 'lax' on environment

In early May, Canada amended its Shipping Act, with the intention of making Canada 'a leader in the prevention of marine pollution' according to Transport Minister Cannon, with 'zero tolerance' for pollution. However, TravelJust, an NGO, alleges that the recent reforms have effectively relaxed the laws relating to Cruise ship dumping regulations, adopting earlier voluntary cruise industry guidelines. In particular there is no provision to end sludge discharging in Canadian marine protected areas while garbage can now be discharged 3 miles from shore (used to be 4). Currently it is legal and customary for cruise ships worldwide to dump garbage in the ocean as long as they are 12 miles offshore. It has been estimated that every person

on a cruise generates about 3.5 kg of waste every day, with adverse effects on marine wildlife, coral reefs and beaches. Large fines are regularly imposed on cruise lines.

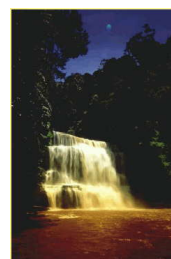
Ecuador: Government may preserve rainforest for \$3.5bn 'compensation'

On World Environment Day, Ecuador's President Correa is asking for international compensation for not exploiting the Ishpingo-Tiputini-Tambococha (ITT) oil-block concession in the Amazonian jungle inhabited by the Yasuni people. Under the proposal, if foreign state and private donations reach USD 3.5 bn or half of the projected revenue for 10 years worth of oil extraction, the Ecuador government will not allow drilling in the region. So far Spain and Norway have reportedly expressed interest. Some environmental NGOs have expressed scepticism over the feasibility of the plan, while others point out that it would be an interesting application of the Clean Development Mechanism. In an unrelated development, indigenous groups in Ecuador are suing oil giant Chevron Corp. for USD 6 bn over alleged environmental damages.

Mexico: Controversial tourism mega-project in Chiapas resuscitated

Mexico's La Jornada reported that the National Trust Fund for Tourism Development (Fonatur) has announced that an 8000-room theme park and golf development to be build around the Classic Maya ruins of Palenque may now be completed by 2012. To be called "The Entrance to the Maya World" this mega project had been frozen for 8 years in the face of local opposition and armed unrest in Chiapas state. It will cover 58,490 hectares including the archaeological zone of Palenque, Lacandona Forest, the Blue Water Cascades and the beaches of Catazajá, and worryingly, it may require the relocation of local communities.

Asia & Pacific



Malaysia: Aims for 3rd World Heritage Site

Sukau Rainforest Lodge (Web: www.sukau.com) Reports that the government of Sabah State is working towards getting Unesco to recognise Maliau Basin Conservation Area as the third world heritage site in Malaysia, a move which would encourage

ecotourism development in Sabah. Both existing world heritage sites in Malaysia are to be found on Borneo, Mount Kinabalu in Sabah and Mulu Caves in Sarawak. Dubbed Sabah's "Lost World", the 58,840-hectare Maliau Basin Conservation Area was upgraded to a Protected (Class One) Forest Reserve in 1997.

Thailand: NATR to pass the torch

The North Andaman Tsunami Relief, an NGO set up in the aftermath of the deadly Indian Ocean tsunami, is preparing to close its office with most of their projects having been successfully completed. The official ceremony will take place on Thursday June 28, at 4 pm. Over the past two and a half years, since the Tsunami, NATR has proved exemplary in providing relief and sustainable development to communities in the Kuraburi area of Southern Thailand.

Luckily, many members of the NATR team will continue working in the area under a new ecotour company called Andaman Discoveries
(Web: www.andamandiscoveries.com)

Europe

Greece: ‘Summer Academy’ on Culture & Sustainable Rural Development.

The Euracademy Association (Web: www.euracademy.org) organises the 6th Summer Academy on "Culture and Sustainable Rural Development" to be held in the city of Chania, Crete, Greece, from 17-26th August 2007. The Summer Academy will take place at the facilities of MAICH, the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (MAICH) and will build on the experience of the successful previous Summer Academies in Sweden (2002), Greece (2003), Poland (2004), Finland (2005) and Hungary (2006). The 6th Summer Academy aims to discuss the role of culture and cultural heritage in the sustainable development of rural areas. The Academy will explore such topics as: Rural heritage, contemporary culture, sustainable development, the role of rural museums, tourism as a channel of preserving and promoting rural heritage, research and documentation of rural heritage, planning with a focus on cultural heritage. The Summer Academy should be of interest to museum staff, managers of cultural activities, members of cultural associations, researchers, professionals of ethnography, history and art, teachers, policy makers, managers and animators of rural development. The deadline for applications is June 30, 2007. For more information, please read the official announcement at www.euracademy.org under Summer Academies.

Ireland: Greenbox a finalist in the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards

The ‘Greenbox’ project (Web: www.greenbox.ie) was one of four finalists at this years Tourism for Tomorrow

Awards which were held in Lisbon, in early June. The Greenbox is Ireland's first integrated ecotourism destination. The area of the Greenbox includes Counties Fermanagh, Leitrim, West Cavan, North Sligo, South Donegal and North West Monaghan. Commenting on the announcement, the Irish Minister for Arts, Sport & Tourism John O'Donoghue, extended his congratulations and noted "This is a very impressive achievement for the Green Box. Despite being in existence for only 5 years, it has earned recognition and prominence to the extent that it can compete with long-time established world-renowned destinations"

Malta: Heritage wins, Golf loses

The Maltese government has decided to turn the Xaghra l-Hamra area into a heritage park instead of a golf course as originally planned. The area is rich in endemic and endangered species, as well as boasting over 100 archaeological sites including cart ruts. "With Malta's essential water supplies dwindling rapidly, the enormous water demands of a golf course would have been totally unsustainable." said a representative of 'Gaia', while Flimkien ghal Ambjent Ahjar (FAA), another local NGO, welcomed the decision to resume farmers' leases, that is hoped to encourage initiatives such as organic farming projects. FAA and Gaia will both play a part in the management of the new heritage park. Heavily dependent on tourism, which accounts for 24% of the country's GNP, Malta has been a tourist destination since the 1950's. Rapid and unstructured tourism development in rural areas and along sensitive coastal stretches has adversely affected ecological habitats, and accompanied by illegal dumping and littering. The Tourism Authority of Malta has recently undertaken a number of initiatives to improve environmental and cultural aspects of the island, including coastal and heritage tourism zone monitoring and an eco-certification program for accommodation providers.


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ECO MEETINGS

"Of all the means which wisdom acquires to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is friendship" –Epicurus

The Global Ecotourism Conference in Oslo (May 14-16, 2007) was a great chance to meet many Members and Friends. This is a selection of photos. For more details and pictures please see <http://www.ecotourismglobalconference.org>



With GEC co-organiser **Stefanos Fotiou** of UNEP



With **Stefanos Fotiou** and co-panellists **Ariane Janer** (Ecobrasil) & Prof. **Habis Alsamawi** (U. of Jordan)



With ECOCLUB Ecolodge Partner **Annuruddha Bandara** (River Garden Resort - Sri Lanka)



With **Michael Castro** of TIES



Ecotourism Norway's **Lone Lamark** opens the Global Ecotourism Conference



With ECOCLUB Member **Johan Nyqvist** (Nature's Best - Sweden)

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