

Declaration of the  
**Consultation on Tourism, Traditions and Terrorism**  
organised by  
**Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT) and Christian Conference of Asia  
(CCA)**  
April 28 – May 1, 2003, Bangkok, Thailand

The representatives of civil society, academe and religious bodies from Australia, Bangladesh, Burma, France, Germany, Hong Kong (China), India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia and Thailand who met in Bangkok at the Consultation on Tourism, Traditions and Terrorism during April 28 – May 1, 2003, express their support for the peace movements around the world for solidarity action with the people of Iraq who have suffered two wars and sanctions. The coalition led by the US and UK are the perpetrators of this crime of war and occupation and as violators of international law, we call for the consideration of a boycott of corporate products and services from the member countries of the coalition. We condemn the Governments of our region that took an ambiguous position or supported the war on Iraq. This has weakened the world movement for peace and justice.

**Tourism and the new world order**

The vocabulary of the new tourism world order includes words like sustainability, empowerment, participation, partnership, peace, good governance etc. which indicate the globalisation of the tourism discourse. We believe crisis management is not the key to the future of tourism; rather people centered concerns should become the core of our approach.

We deliberated the burning issues of our regions such as the attempt to lease the Andaman and Nicobar Island to foreign corporations in India, the corporate take over and environmental degradation of Koh Chang island in Thailand, reclamation of Yung Shue Wan Harbour for large chain of stores and restaurants in the Lamma Island in Hong Kong, displacement of the people in round houses in Fujian in China, the use of forced and prison labour for tourism infrastructure in Burma, alienation of the communities in Bali, the increasing sex tourism, trafficking and child pornography often supported by tourists, all of which indicated that besides being a high risk business, tourism impacts on destinations have consequences for communities around the world. The debate on sustainable tourism must give due importance and consideration to the issues that concern human dignity and protection of nature. We also appeal to the World Heritage Movement, to ensure that there is no displacement of people at designated sites.

The trade negotiations since the Uruguay Round have been crucial for developing and under-developed countries in their coverage and scope. An important arena of contestation between countries of the North and South was the 'opening-up' of the services sector. Tourism services negotiations are being used to increase pressure on governments to open-up to transnational corporations. We condemn the aggressive and unfair tactics of the European Union and the US in forcing developing countries into submission. The most critical area is the privatisation of basic services whilst taking extremely protectionist positions to safeguard their own interests.

## **Tourism at Crossroads: Challenges and Opportunities**

We believe if tourism has to be seen as an opportunity, promoters and developers have to be transparent and recognize that in the present, tourism is a dependency industry. At this moment of crisis, we the people have an opportunity to reflect on existing development practises, to reclaim land and resources, to rehabilitate the environment, to revive traditions, culture and spirituality, and to politicize the debate.

Despite frequent slumps, tourism continues to grow according to forecasts. We appeal to governments, inter governmental agencies and industry to take a more responsible, accountable and cautious approach to its development. When we view tourist numbers and targets, we are aware that statistics can lead to false economics. Therefore, peoples movements and community representatives must lobby governments that tourism development is often an irreversible process that requires industry, corporations, aid agencies and governments not to use subsidies as an incentive to encourage thoughtless tourism projects, activities and products.

## **Tourism and Development**

All tourist destinations are driven by money and over-commercialization has made the economic benefits of tourism more important than any other. Tourism statistics give us an illusionary view of the contribution of tourism particularly to least developed countries and developing countries which are not based on any criteria of validity. The data are frequently used to justify distorted infrastructure development based on external borrowing leading to debt-trap for nations. Therefore, we believe any form or type of tourism has to be developed on the basis of local needs, motivations and paths.

Our evaluation of tourism addresses the issue of justice and peace – who is giving and who is receiving, without reciprocating, in the preservation of ecology and the alleviation of social, political and economic ills?

Like terrorism, tourism in the contemporary world is often a form of aggression on unsuspecting communities, cultures and the environment. We believe that the demand for peace and justice in *our* new world order requires the UN as an international body to stand firm on the basis of international law. The UN should accord priority to these concerns of all its member countries represented in the General Assembly instead of giving post legitimation for any unilateral action anywhere in the world.

## **Tourism, Traditions and Religion**

Religions are a vehicle for peace between peoples and nations. Fundamentalisms are undermining the principles of non-violence, tolerance and peace upheld by religions. The essence of spirituality is one of balance and peace. Several incidences of violence and terror have been motivated in the name of faith and religion. The attacks on September 11 and its aftermath has unraveled a tragic phase in human history. The campaigns against the so-called axis of evil in religious terms are an expression of Christian fundamentalism, which we thought had long

been overcome. We are thus faced with the problem that religion is being used as an instrument for political, militant or terrorist purposes.

We believe that tourism as a vehicle, and the tourist as a pilgrim of peace and justice cannot be realized as long as commodification and conspicuous consumption, unsustainable uses of natural resources like land, water, energy, forests and oceans as well as unfair labour and trade practices are the norm in tourism. Resistance to such aggression requires peoples' movements and faith communities that draw their inspiration from vibrant histories, spirituality, cultures and traditions that still remain alive across large regions of the world to fight barriers to the free movement of peoples.

We the participants of this consultation strongly *urge* all people of goodwill to strive to turn this moment of crisis and angst into one of hope and faith in humanity and its history. We pledge to fight the dark forces of globalisation, terror, violence and corporate tyranny and uphold and restore the values of dialogue, participation, democratisation and self-determination.

#### Recommendations:

1. All people and movements should consider a boycott of corporate products and services of the UK and US and allied countries.
2. All countries should ensure that there is no displacement of people in designating world heritage sites.
3. All movements should use this opportunity to reflect on existing development practices.
4. All community representatives should lobby their governments to be cautious on tourism development.
5. All governments and other developmental agencies must take a more responsible and democratic approach to tourism. We demand public debate and public hearings.
6. All communities and movements should base their development models on their own needs, motivations and paths.
7. People centered approaches to tourism must be developed through exchange of information.
8. The UN should stand firm and accord priority to the concerns of the members of the General Assembly.
9. Religious bodies and leaders should condemn terrorism in the name of religion and bring people back to the path of true spirituality.
10. Peoples movements and tourists should draw their inspiration for travel on the basis of the vibrant histories, cultures and traditions that remain alive across the world.
11. All people of good will are called to fight the dark forces of globalisation, terror, violence, corporate tyranny through dialogue, participation and self determination.

Bangkok, May 1, 2003