

From Mumbai to Porto Alegre

Statement of Concern of the Tourism Interventions Group at the 4th World Social Forum

Who really benefits from Tourism?

We, the Tourism Interventions Group, at the 4th World Social Forum (WSF) in Mumbai (16-21 Jan. 2004) declare our commitment to change the character of global tourism towards a tourism that is just and equitable for people in destinations. Our interventions (including an intercontinental dialogue on tourism and four seminars) brought tourism issues to the forefront of the WSF agenda.

Through testimonies of community struggles and initiatives, we highlighted a wide range of responses to globalised tourism at the grassroots. Our interventions at WSF provided a platform for a meaningful intercontinental dialogue on the social, economic, political, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism.

In an 'Activists Strategy Meeting on Tourism' (Mumbai, 22-23 Jan. 2004, hosted by the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism -ECOT) we evaluated the impacts of our interventions and committed ourselves to carrying forward the momentum to the next WSF at Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2005. The Strategy Meeting emphasised the need for wide dissemination of the news of our successful interventions at Mumbai. Discussions on future actions will be shared with communities, movements, network partners and other groups. It was also decided to form the **Global Tourism Interventions Forum**, which would take forward this important work.

We decided to strengthen and uphold the grassroots perspectives of tourism, which position our interventions against those of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and other mainstream definitions of tourism policy and development. As the WTO is now a specialised UN agency, we will address its new mandate and take forward civil society engagements to democratise tourism.

A primary concern is the undemocratic nature of the ongoing negotiations in the World Trade Organisation's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) that are slated to end by January 2005. We stress the urgent need to bring in experiences from the grassroots on the environmental and social costs of tourism to inform the negotiating positions of governments and underline the need for a rollback in the negotiations.

Highlighting tourism issues within a multitude of anti-globalisation and human rights movements such as those related to women, children, dalits, indigenous people, migrants, unorganised labour, small island, mountain and coastal communities, as well as struggles related to land, water and access to natural resources, is crucial to sharpen local struggles and community initiatives of those impacted by tourism. Networking is at the core of future strategising to identify areas of common concern, forge alliances with like-minded individuals, organisations and movements and influence tourism policy agendas. Democracy, transparency and corporate and governmental accountability in tourism will be placed high on the agenda for concerted action and strategic interventions.

From our experiences of working on tourism issues we are extremely sceptical about the claims of tourism being a provider of jobs and earner of foreign exchange. We are concerned that the actual benefits that finally reach people in destinations are negligible compared to the profits of transnational tourism corporations. Leakages constitute a major loss of income for host communities and countries. At the same time it is local communities who bear the costs of tourism development in terms of social, cultural and environmental impacts.

At the next WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2005, we will continue to highlight critical issues in tourism. We look forward to working in solidarity with local community representatives, activists and researchers from various parts of the world to strengthen our struggle and develop strategies for a tourism that is equitable, people-centred, sustainable, ecologically sensible, child-friendly and gender-just.

For the Tourism Interventions Group:

EQUATIONS (India)

ECUMENICAL COALITION ON TOURISM (Hong Kong SAR - China)

EED-TOURISM WATCH (Germany)

ARBEITSKREIS TOURISMUS UND ENTWICKLUNG (akte) - (Switzerland)

Vgl. Beitrag "Wer profitiert tatsächlich vom Tourismus?"