



## Last call to Durban

### “Beyond Numbers: A call for social, economic and climate justice in tourism”

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*A more just and sustainable development of tourism is needed to reduce impacts on the global climate and to contribute effectively to poverty alleviation and creating opportunities for communities and relevant stakeholders in tourism destinations.*

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NGOs and individuals from the global South and North are concerned that tourism is used as an excuse to avoid any global binding emission regulation for aviation. Tourism industry interest groups argue that a regulative framework for capping emissions from international air traffic could have negative impacts on tourism revenues that are assumed to contribute to poverty alleviation in developing countries. Their message in brief is: ‘A binding climate regime for tourism might undermine development and its targets.’

The organisations that have endorsed this paper question this argument and call for a serious and differentiated debate on tourism and poverty alleviation in the negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The travel and tourism industry has to date protected its business interests in the name of poverty alleviation. It is urgent to highlight the complex social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of tourism in destinations, particularly as these affect workers and communities, and draw attention to the irresponsible stance of the tourism industry in the UNFCCC process. The debate on the role of tourism in achieving a ‘green economy’ must go beyond the statements repeated ad nauseam presenting only the positive economic spin-offs of tourism growth. It is time to seriously debate the rapid growth of the tourism sector and its impacts on climate, biodiversity and natural resources and human well-being and development. A people-centred and human rights-based approach is needed to break the deadlock for binding regulations of emissions from international transport and pave the way for sustainable tourism practices.

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The tourism sector accounts for an estimated 5% of anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions but its overall contribution to climate change, if measured as radiative forcing of all greenhouse gases, is in the order of 5.2-12.5% (Scott et al., 2010). Aviation accounts for 40% of tourism’s CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, car transport for 32% and accommodation for 21%. The remaining 7% arises from activities by tourists (4%) and other forms of transport (3%), including in particular cruise ships. It is forecast that carbon emissions from tourism will grow by 162% during the period 2005-2035 (UNWTO, 2008). Legislative regulations to reduce emissions from tourism do not exist up to now; in fact, tourism in its entirety has not been debated at any of the international climate political negotiations to date (Respect, 2009).

In the UNFCCC process only emissions from aviation are negotiated, together with emissions from shipping (the so called ‘bunker fuels’ or ‘bunkers’). In a recent study, IPCC authors conclude that considering the best available estimates for non-CO<sub>2</sub> effects, global aviation contributed 4.9 %, in the worst scenario even up to 14% to man-made climate change in 2005 (Lee et al., 2009). These climate impacts from air travel are caused by a relatively small fraction of around 2% of the world population that actively takes part in air travel. So far the negotiations on ‘bunker fuels’ have been conducted in a half-hearted way – after many years they are not incorporated in any obligatory emission reduction targets. Bunker fuels are not bound by the Kyoto-Protocol. In 1997, the responsibility to reduce aviation emissions was handed over to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). The organization was commissioned to develop a suitable climate protection mechanism for its sector. It has failed miserably in this task: after 14 years the ICAO has yet to come up with any significant and internationally binding measure or target.

In the climate negotiations the tourism industry has to date successfully protected its business interests in the name of development and poverty eradication. Through international bodies like the ICAO or the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) tourism industry interest groups argue that any binding emission reduction mechanism for aviation – for instance a global fuel tax or emission trading scheme – would result in increased costs for passenger transportation, which in turn would impact negatively on the economies of developing countries. It is claimed that people in developing countries that are heavily dependent on tourism revenues would be doubly affected – on the one hand through direct impacts from climate change, and on the other hand from reduced income and livelihoods associated with decreased tourism arrivals. Even the UNWTO – a UN specialised agency that acts as an intergovernmental forum on global tourism policy – takes the stance that climate regulations must not put a disproportionate burden on the tourism private sector and must not impair its ability to grow. However, neither UNWTO nor ICAO have ever gone beyond this ‘defensive’ stance, nor have they made any concrete proposals regarding the design of regulative climate solutions for the aviation sector, the securing of funds for financing adaptation measures in developing countries, and ways forward on how to deal with the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” of the Convention.

The often-painted picture that tourism growth equals revenues, which equals poverty alleviation, is highly simplistic, as is the notion that this calculus will be undermined by any kind of binding climate commitment. In order to meet both climate and development targets, it is necessary to discuss frankly the extent to which uncontrolled or unplanned tourism growth really contributes to poverty alleviation in the Global South. Does tourism actually contribute to poverty, and if so how? Will climate regulations really limit the travel and tourism industry’s potential to address poverty?

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To tackle such questions requires new thinking on tourism’s role in the global climate challenge:

- The World Development Movement (WDM) has released a report with the New Economics Foundation (NEF), which investigates the impact that halting growth in UK aviation would have on tourism in developing countries: The vast majority of air travellers from the UK go to Europe, and then to richer parts of the world such as North America and Japan. This illustrates the fact that the lion’s share of global tourism takes place between developed countries. About 60% of all international tourist arrivals can be attributed to the group of Highly Developed Countries, whereas only 10% of tourists travel to developing countries. Initially halting growth in aviation can be achieved by focusing on short haul flights, which needs the carrot of better rail services and the stick of higher taxes on aviation as well as an end to massive airport expansion. Such measures would not impact developing countries.
- The group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) receives only 1.2% of global tourism arrivals. If growth in UK outbound tourism to developing countries were to be curbed, this would have only a small impact on the economic growth of countries that receive a proportionally large number of UK tourists. If outbound long haul travel from the UK were limited, the economies of Kenya, Thailand and the Dominican Republic would lose between 0.1 and 0.4% of GDP growth by 2020 (WDM and NEF, 2008). Therefore measures will be needed to compensate such countries or exclude them from measures to reduce growth in long haul travel.
- The report of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing foresees measures might impact air travel by increased costs of around 2-3% (AGF report, 2009). Research indicates that any such negotiated taxation will negligibly reduce demand, especially for long-haul travel, which is less elastic than short-haul travel due to a lack of good substitutes for long journeys compared to short journeys that can be undertaken by car, train or boat (IIED, 2011).
- It must also be questioned how much of the income generated from tourism eventually reaches the ‘poor.’ Various studies show that as much as 85% of tourism revenues ‘leak’ out of developing countries (cited in Bolwell and Weinz, 2008), due to various factors most notably the power of international tour operators (Broham, 1996), foreign ownership and the high import propensity of tourism (Jules, 2005).
- Moreover, the share of tourism revenue that stays in the national economy does not automatically benefit poor people. As many examples show, tourism investments in developing countries often narrowly benefit the small elites leaving the local population without access to the tourism market or to decent jobs. Extensive literature conducted under the auspices of the British ‘pro-poor’ tourism programme ([www.propoortourism.org.uk](http://www.propoortourism.org.uk)) repeatedly illustrates that poor people require support in the form of capacity building and market linkages, to keep pace with tourism growth and to benefit meaningfully from it. Lack of such support inevitably results in ‘missed opportunities’ for development and even resistance by the local population, for example in Egypt where the dictatorship and its clientele profited from tourism at the expense of the Egyptian majority (Tourism Watch Nr. 64, 2011). In the Dominican Republic, a 20-year tourism boom has failed to boost human development which is clearly stated over the years by the Human Development Index. And in the fragile coral archipelago of the Maldives, fishing communities are in crisis while the tourist industry booms and half of the population are living without electricity (AKTE, 2009).

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- There are examples where tourism development creates or reinforces poverty by depriving local communities of their economic base. Poor households and communities tend to be less resilient against the negative socioeconomic, cultural and/or environmental impacts of tourism compared to those that directly benefit from the sector through employment or the supply of goods and services to it. There are cases where in the name of tourism growth and development, indigenous populations and other destination stakeholders are discriminated against, their freedom of expression curtailed and their participation in decision-making processes obstructed. Market forces of supply and demand inflate the prices of land and other vital resources, often rendering access to these beyond the means of local people. Natural resources are often diverted for the sake of tourists to the detriment of local populations struggling to access water or land for their everyday needs.
- There are countless examples of the ways in which unplanned or forced tourism development results in environmental degradation, social exploitation and human rights violations. The impacts of climate change will exacerbate these impacts and amplify conflicts over water, energy and other resources.

‘Successful’ tourism development cannot be expressed and defined in purely economic terms like market share and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as presented in the UNFCCC process by tourism industry interest groups. In tourism, as in many other sectors, it is necessary to develop new yardsticks that take into account the full socioeconomic, cultural and environmental sustainability of the prescribed strategies and solutions within this sector.

A starting point for resolving the climate & poverty challenge for the tourism sector could be the AGF’s recommendation to ensure ‘no net incidence’ for developing countries resulting from any measures to generate climate finance from international transport. Within this concept of ‘no net incidence’ it would be possible to provide an annual rebate for developing countries to neutralize any economic burden deriving from a decline in tourism arrivals. The remaining revenue, mainly from developed countries, would be earmarked for climate change action in developing countries. Further, to minimize the potential negative consequences on the most vulnerable developing countries, the approach of the “de minimis thresholds” should be applied. The effect of these thresholds should be to exempt traffic to and/or from Small Island Development States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDC). States with less than 1% of global aviation activity would also be exempt from market-based measures. This would mean that while regulative measures would apply only to an estimated 22 states, these would capture about 80% of emissions from international aviation.

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### Groups endorsing this paper:

- **Acknowledge** that climate regulations must not conflict with development goals and disadvantage people in the South economically. They stress that the interdependencies between climate change, tourism and development are very complex and go beyond pure tourism growth numbers and emission reduction targets;
- **Express** their deep concern about the undifferentiated and irresponsible manner in which these complexities are brought forward by tourism industry interest groups within the UNFCCC process, and the general lack of political will to find real solutions that will benefit the Global South. The assumed important function of tourism as a ‘development motor’ is being constantly used as an instrument against any progress on the inclusion of aviation into global climate policy;
- **Call upon** the Conference of the Parties (COP) 17 in Durban to develop strong guidelines for ICAO including an ambitious emission reduction target linked to clear timeframes to create a framework for quickly reducing greenhouse gas emissions from international aviation. At the same time COP 17 must ensure a fair contribution of the aviation sector to the funding of mitigation and adaptation measures in developing countries while ensuring no net incidence of impacts from climate protection measures on poor people.
- **Call upon** the UNWTO to play a constructive role in the UNFCCC process characterised by serious in-depth debate with its members on minimizing any economic burdens that may accrue to developing countries. The proposed concept of “no net incidence” may help to find solutions that will actually benefit the poor.
- **Call for** a fundamental transformation of global tourism to create fair, just, sustainable and participatory models for business and development that will respect human rights. Communities in tourism destinations should be empowered to share in the benefits of tourism growth and to take part in decision-making processes that affect them.

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## This paper has been developed by the following NGOs:

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- Tourism Watch/ Church Development Service (EED)
- Ecumenical Coalition On Tourism (ECOT)
- arbeitskreis tourismus & entwicklung (AKTE)
- Naturefriends International (NFI)
- Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA)

## These groups endorse the paper:

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- CETRI - Centre tricontinental, Belgium
  - World Council of Churches
  - Tourism Concern, UK
  - Acción por un Turismo Responsable
  - Coastal Development Partnership, Bangladesh
  - National Council of Churches, India
  - Institute for Tourism Research + Planning
  - Community Tourism Council of Prainha do Canto Verde, Ceará, Brazil
  - ALBA SUD, Spain
  - Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN)/ Asian Resource Foundation (ARF)
  - Peace for Life, Philippines
  - Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
  - The United Church of Canada
  - FASTENOPFER, Switzerland
  - Asia Pacific Ecumenical News
  - Foro de Turismo Responsable – FTR, Spain
  - ATE Swiss Association for transport and environment
  - forum anders reisen e.V.
  - atmosfair gGmbH
  - Andaman Discoveries and the North Andaman Community Tourism Network
  - Alternative Tourism Group, Palestine
  - KABANI - the other direction, India
  - The Blue Yonder, India
  - Traverdo GmbH
  - Alliance Sud
  - ECPAT Switzerland
  - SWISSAID, Swiss Foundation for Development Cooperation
  - Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research, South Africa
  - VCD - Verkehrsclub Deutschland (Transportation Club Germany)
  - Germanwatch
  - Bread for the World
  - Transport & Environment
  - Pacific Conference of Churches
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