

ANOTHER TOURISM IS POSSIBLE!

WORLD TOURISM DAY 2008 LIMA, PERU

FÜR EINEN KLIMAWANDEL IM TOURISMUS
PARA UN CAMBIO DE CLIMA EN EL TURISMO
CHANGING THE ATMOSPHERE IN TOURISM

Another tourism is possible!

A civil society's perspective on tourism and climate change

On the occasion of

World Tourism Day 2008, Lima, Peru

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) takes the opportunity to devote the World Tourism Day 2008 in Lima, Peru, to „Tourism Responding to the Challenge of Climate Change“. The intention is to promote the Davos Declaration on “Climate change and tourism responding to global challenges” within the tourism industry.

There is a consensus that tourism is a victim of global warming but also contributes to it. The UNWTO calls upon all stakeholders in tourism to take action to protect the climate.

At the same time the UNWTO celebrates the fact that in 2007, international tourist arrivals grew by an estimated 6 % to reach a new record of nearly 900 million – an “astonishing achievement” according to UNWTO, given that the 800 million mark had only been reached two years earlier. Given that aviation contributes an estimated 4 – 7 % to global warming, there should be no reason to celebrate growing numbers which are due to air transport.

The aviation industry is a big threat as it is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gases. Air travel, particularly long haul international flights emitting greenhouse gases at high cruising altitudes, adds substantially to the effects of climate change.

The massive expansion and construction of new airports, the launching and expansion of budget and short haul airlines and routes and tourism projects that require major infrastructure are celebrated as success.

The signing organisations question whether these growing numbers imply sustainable growth. We fear that these indicators just imply that we are in a growth trap where social and environmental demelioration is not taken into account. Therefore, we call upon all stakeholders to rethink growth indicators and to include questions of sustainable development in their understanding of success.

Up to now, the debate on climate change and tourism has rarely been related to mitigation, but used to focus mainly on adaptation and on the compensation of green house gas emissions.

Social or environmental issues such as the impact of tourism and of climate change on the people - especially but not merely - in developing countries, on fragile ecosystems, biodiversity or the protection of indigenous people remains untouched by the tourism industry. But to ensure sustainable development and growth which does not threaten its own resources, decision makers in tourism have to take these concerns into account.

Instead of not flying at all – which would be the only efficient way to avoid carbon emissions -, we are asking the tourism industry to design climate friendly tourism products, including: cultural changes in travel patterns (shift to closer located destinations, decrease in the average number of trips per person and simultaneous increase of the length-of-stay); modal shifts (shift of transport volumes from airplane and car to rail and coach) as well as climate-oriented mobility management (optimization of entire passenger transport chains through information, communication, organisation and coordination); and use of renewable energy as well as measures for the optimization of energy efficiency.

We call upon all stakeholders to take all measures possible to mitigate the negative impacts from tourism by developing and implementing integrated holistic climate friendly tourism concepts.

It can be observed that mainstream operators currently only undertake mitigation measures if these are compliant with their strategy of consistent growth and expansion of long-haul segments. Related action largely aims at improving operating efficiency, such as saving energy in accommodation facilities or reducing fuel consumption of aircraft. Even though relative operative emissions could be considerably improved in the next few decades, research strongly indicates that a mere technology-oriented approach will neither reduce the sector's overall emissions, nor stabilize them at current levels. Thus, there is a need for a holistic approach that combines several mitigation strategies. To make sure that climate protection measures are not a flash in the pan, the tourism industry has to extend its CSR strategies by including entire destinations and to implement measures, including climate protection, with greater commitment.

Eventually, it will be the consumer's choice to demand and support climate friendly products. But it is not only civil societies', but also UNWTO's and industry's responsibility to raise awareness with consumers on climate

protection and tourism. Only well informed tourists will demand climate friendly tourism products.

The UNWTO as a UN agency is not an industry association, but has to follow the United Nations mandate. It is questionable if the UNWTO understood its role – as it has recently recommended a flight emission calculator of ICAO that only discloses carbon and hides other significant emissions. The industry and UNWTO are asked to raise climate awareness by telling the whole “climate truth”. Setting the highest available standards should be the challenge, not going for the lowest standards.

The undersigned organisations appreciate the content of the Davos Declaration which gives detailed advice, guidance and recommendation to all stakeholders in tourism. But we see a lack in ambitious efforts of the relevant stakeholders when it comes to implementation and transparent information.

We call upon all stakeholders to take responsibility, to accept the consequences of the diverse findings and position papers and to start implementing serious mitigation measures.

The UNWTO's manifest argues that tourism generates income in developing countries. In reality, this is true for only a small part of the population. For the majority of poor people, however, increased poverty and conflict is the main concern. Therefore, the industry needs to rethink and change its products and economic behaviour, so as to be able to move towards an environmental, climate and socially responsible form of tourism.

Regarding the positive impact of tourism highlighted by UNWTO, one has to review the UN body's statement that tourism eliminates poverty. The shocking news earlier this year from Egypt, the Dominican Republic, etc. where local people started hunger revolts, has shown that even in well established tourism destinations, people do not gain enough benefits from tourism and the tourism revenues often don't reach the community level.

However, from a civil society perspective we believe that the international debate on tourism and climate change needs to be widened to include a human rights based approach. While the international community discusses climate change, tourism and adaptation, compensation or mitigation, we call upon governments and industry to think of human disaster prevention strategies related to tourism and climate change. We have valid concerns that all well-known problems related to tourism and human rights will be exacerbated through the impact of climate change.

We call upon governments and the tourism industry to take preventative measures to minimise the negative impact of climate change and tourism on all destinations. This involves widening the scope of the debate to include promoting gender equity, protecting children, ensuring land rights of local and indigenous peoples, ensuring that natural resources like water and land are not threatened by privatization, creating means and providing training for disaster prevention for everybody, and

ensuring social security for people working in tourism. And finally, equally sharing the profit from tourism with all involved and affected.

National and international sustainable tourism development strategies that consider the Global Code of Ethics, the Davos Declaration and their implementation at all levels and by all decision makers and stakeholders, are a basic necessity to combat climate change, eradicate poverty and guarantee fair and ethical tourism.

Another tourism is possible – but needs a paradigm shift!

On behalf of the following organisations:

Heinz Fuchs, Programme Director

Tourism Watch, Special Desk of Church Development Service (EED)

Angela Giraldo, co-director

KATE-Kontaktstelle für Umwelt & Entwicklung (Centre for Ecology & Development)

Christian Baumgartner, General Secretary

International Friends of Nature

Wolfgang Mehl, managing director

Climate alliance austria

Margit Leuthold, director

respect – Institute for Integrative Tourism and Development

Caesar D'Mello, executive director

Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT)

Christine Plüss, director

Working Group on Tourism and Development (akte)

TourismWatch
EED-Informationsdienst Dritte Welt-Tourismus

