

## Panel Discussion on Human Rights and Tourism at the International Tourism Exchange (ITB) in Berlin, 2011

Corporate human rights policies and human rights impact assessments for tourism projects can contribute to preventing adverse impacts of tourism on human rights, according to experts at a panel discussion on tourism and human rights at the International Tourism Exchange (ITB) on 11th March, 2011, in Berlin. Representatives of the tourism sector, politics and civil society presented examples of human rights violations in the context of tourism and options to address them in an effective manner.



Heinz Fuchs (EED Tourism Watch) pointed out the limitations of voluntary Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Michael Windfuhr (German Institute for Human Rights) emphasised the primary responsibility of governments in tourist destinations, and Linda Poppe (Survival International, Germany) made clear that tourism business cannot simply rely on governments who may

themselves violate human rights, as in the case of Botswana (<http://tourism-watch.de/node/1627>). She asserted the important role of tour operators who should address human rights concerns.

Examples of how they can do so were presented by Lena Lawitschka (TUI Germany), in particular with regard to the protection of children from commercial sexual exploitation. While the tourism sector had taken action in this regard, it also depended on the cooperation of the authorities, which, she said, was often lacking.

This was confirmed by Father Shay Cullen (Preda) who works in the Philippines – a country where thousands of women and children are trafficked into slavery. "If hotel staff in a posh hotel is arranging child prostitutes, this chain of hotels has to be confronted with this reality", he said. He called for a very strict monitoring of abuses, so that hotels and tour operators involved in human rights violations could be boycotted.

Christoph Strässer (MP, Committee for Human Rights and Justice of the German Bundestag) regards prosecution as an important, but "not easy" way of dealing with human rights violations, but also favours binding standards for tourism businesses. Germany should make use of its membership in the UN Security Council to strengthen human rights related corporate responsibility.

### For further information:

**Summary of demands and recommendations:** [http://www.tourism-watch.de/files/eed\\_tourismus\\_humanrights\\_shortversion\\_2011\\_engl.pdf](http://www.tourism-watch.de/files/eed_tourismus_humanrights_shortversion_2011_engl.pdf)

**TourismWatch Special Issue on Tourism and Human Rights, March 2011:**  
<http://tourism-watch.de/en/node/1618>