

BABIA GÓRA DECLARATION

ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN MOUNTAIN AREAS

The participants of the International Workshop for CEE Countries "Tourism in Mountain Areas and the Convention on Biological Diversity", held in Sucha Beskidzka, Biosphere Reserve Babia Gora National Park, Poland, from 1 to 5 October 2002, from the countries as follows: Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine and supported by the UNEP and UNESCO,

Acknowledging the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions that declare the year 2002 as the International Year of Mountains (A/RES/53/24) and International Year of Ecotourism (A/RES/53/200), thus drawing the world's attention to the need to foster sustainable tourism in mountain areas;

Considering the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism adopted at the World Ecotourism Summit, held in Québec City, March 2002, and the plan of implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, September 2002;

Considering the Draft International CBD Guidelines for Activities Related to Sustainable Tourism Development in Vulnerable Terrestrial, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems and Habitats of Major Importance for Biological Diversity and Protected Areas, including Fragile Riparian and Mountain Ecosystems prepared at the Workshop on Biological Diversity and Tourism held in Santo Domingo, in June 2001 under the Convention of Biological Diversity, and taking into account the process of reviewing the guidelines;

Welcoming the development of a framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable management of the Carpathians, to enhance sustainable mountain development and protection, by promoting sustainable tourism on a regional basis, providing benefits to local communities;

Recognizing that mountains have unique value and special features that include the rapidly changing Earth dynamics, mountain habitats and climate, Earth history records, water catchment areas that are essential to downstream regions, high endemism of flora and fauna, mountain crops, dramatic landscapes, heritage value including inspirational, spiritual and sacred, and isolated mountain communities as stipulated in Agenda 21, Chapter 13;

Considering the growing interest of people in travelling to natural areas in mountain regions which are the second largest tourist destination world wide;

Stating that good governance within each country and at the international level is essential for sustainable tourism development. At the domestic level, sound environmental, social and economic policies, democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people, the rule of law, anti-corruption measures, gender equality and an enabling environment for investment are the basis for sustainable tourism development;

Being aware of the fact that efforts to protect, maintain, and sustainably manage the natural and cultural resources of the mountains cannot be achieved by one country alone, and require regional co-operation;

Emphasising that capacity building and institutional strengthening, as well as specific activities in the field of education, public participation and environmental awareness are essential requirements of sustainable tourism development;

Taking into consideration the Declaration on Tourism and Biodiversity adopted in Berlin 1997, and the wording of the following declarations on sustainable mountain development: Declaration on Environment and Sustainable Development in the Carpathian and Danube Region 2001; Tokyo Declaration 2002 for the International Year of Mountains; Kinabalu Declaration 2002 on Sustainable Mountain Development.

We agreed on the following recommendations to be the nucleus of a strategy consisting of two sections: "Recommendations for the Implementation of Sustainable Tourism in CEE Countries" and "Recommendations for the Use of the 'Draft International CBD Guidelines for Activities Related to Sustainable Tourism Development in Vulnerable Terrestrial, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems and Habitats of Major Importance for Biological Diversity and Protected Areas, including Fragile Riparian and Mountain Ecosystems (hereinafter called the 'CBD Tourism Guidelines')' in the CEE Countries" to meet the challenges faced by mountain ecosystems and mountain communities in Central and Eastern Europe:

Recommendations for the Implementation of Sustainable Tourism in Central and Eastern European Countries

General:

1. The implementation of sustainable tourism should be based on long term strategies.
2. There is a need of capacity building of all stakeholders especially authorities at all horizontal and vertical levels.
3. Local model projects should receive full support at the relevant local, national and/or international levels.
4. With regard to the distribution of information, there should be information exchange at all horizontal and vertical levels.
5. To achieve sustainable tourism, it is essential to develop and use indicators, to set up monitoring systems and promote research on carrying capacity.
6. Technical assistance should be provided by scientists/experts to local research and monitoring, as well as feasibility studies should be supported and promoted.
7. The external costs of tourism activities should be internalized in tourism prices at the local level, based on regional cooperation agreements.
8. Effective synergies between the Convention of Biological Diversity and other multilateral environmental agreements, inter alia, should be encouraged through the development of joint plans and programmes, with due regard to their respective mandates, regarding common responsibilities and concerns.
9. The Convention on Biological Diversity and its provisions, including the active follow-up of its work programmes and decisions made through national action programmes, should be integrated into the programmes and policies, in particular of the economic sectors of the countries, including initiatives which promote community-based sustainable use of biological diversity, and their integration into relevant cross-sectoral strategies, programmes and policies should be strengthened.

10. The conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, promotion and support of initiatives for hot spot areas and other areas essential for biodiversity conservation, and the promotion of the development of national and regional ecological networks and corridors should be strengthened.
11. Tourism activities and development should respect the ecological characteristics and capacity of the local environment in which they take place and should be restricted or prohibited in ecologically sensitive areas.

Local level:

12. A strong support is required to include local goods and services into offers provided to tourists.
13. Revenues created by functioning financial mechanisms (e.g. entrance fees) should be reinvested for the development of sustainable tourism at the same local level.

Local and national level:

14. For the involvement of all stakeholders (especially business, NGOs and public sectors), it is essential (a) to establish partnerships through e.g. round tables, agreements, steering/coordination committees, with a special focus on transboundary cooperation, and (b) to integrate local knowledge, heritage and values in all development initiatives;
15. For raising public awareness at national and local levels, it is necessary to support public awareness campaigns and to establish information centres.
16. Education, especially on ecotourism and conservation of biodiversity, should be strengthened at local and national levels.
17. National guidelines (principles, standards, etc.) and financial support should be provided to develop and maintain ecologically sound infrastructure (i.e. trails, waste management, waste water treatment, housing, etc.).
18. Socio-economic incentives should be provided to support sustainable tourism investments and activities.
19. National and local codes of ethics (based on the Global Code of Ethics on Tourism) should be developed.
20. Sustainable principles should be incorporated into planning and the design of transportation systems, and encourage tour operators and the travelling public to make soft mobility choices;
21. To further educate tourists and influence their behaviour at destinations, collaboration among outbound tour operators, incoming operators, other service providers and NGOs should be promoted at the destinations;

National level:

22. Certification systems, labeling and contests should be developed in order to support good practices in sustainable tourism at local level.
23. For an efficient management of sustainable tourism and for securing the maintenance of biodiversity a legal framework should be developed and strengthened.
24. A database of financial resources for sustainable tourism should exist at the national level and should be accessible to public.

25. Special financial schemes should be established by governmental authorities to support sustainable tourism.

International level:

26. Ways and means, within international regulations, should be found to support local production of goods and services, such as agricultural products, to conserve the traditional ways of land use and improve economic situation of local communities.
27. The CBD Tourism Guidelines should be generally adopted at the international level.
28. Lobbying for special funds to be used for the implementation of sustainable tourism concept should take place at the international level.

Recommendations for the Use of the CBD Tourism Guidelines in the Central and Eastern European Countries

General remarks:

1. It is essential to realise that the quality of life on the Earth depends on biological as well as social and cultural diversity. Therefore, the visions and general directions of human activity as well as the scales of values should respect the fact that there is no chance to survive without biodiversity.
2. The unfavourable economic situation in some mountain areas of the CEE Countries (e.g. high unemployment rate, poverty) is pushing the decision making towards unsustainable development of tourism that is more promising in terms of acquiring quick financial benefits.
3. The understanding and knowledge of the notion of sustainability is missing and therefore public awareness of the need of sustainable development is not on an appropriate level
4. Corruption and a low level of law enforcement belong among the major barriers of an effective implementation of sustainable development in CEE Countries.
5. Despite some obstacles, the guidelines are seen as a feasible tool for sustainable tourism development in the CEE Countries, and they are applicable in the everyday work of tourism management.

Perception of the CBD Tourism Guidelines:

6. The title of the CBD Tourism Guidelines should be shortened and better understandable.
7. Pilot projects should be introduced to gain practical skills as well as feedback on the use of the CBD Tourism Guidelines.
8. The interpretation of the CBD Tourism Guidelines at National levels should be one of the first steps of the implementation so that the National, Regional or Local specifics are reflected.
9. Glossary and definitions of terms used in the general guidelines should be provided.

Policy making:

10. Civil society should be motivated to become more active in fostering effective policy making in the direction of sustainable tourism development.
11. A higher involvement of women in decision-making authorities should be ensured.
12. Each country should develop a national strategy and action plan for tourism, which includes a management framework and timeframe for the implementation of the guidelines.
13. Policies should be adjusted considering the results of impact assessments, including the assessment of potential risks.

Public awareness, education and communication:

14. The communication structures of the public and decision-making authorities have to be improved.
15. The lobby for the implementation of the CBD Tourism Guidelines should be strengthened.
16. The awareness of the CBD Tourism Guidelines in the tourist sector and among other stakeholders should be increased.
17. Information exchange between the CEE Countries should be supported.
18. The employees of administration bodies should be educated in nature conservation and sustainable tourism, with a special regard to the guidelines in order to accelerate the process of understanding.
19. The awareness of the accessibility to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) results and their legally binding status should be improved (at various levels).

International level:

20. International organisations, especially funding organisations, have to be informed about the concept of the CBD Tourism Guidelines, for example by the COP.
21. International organisations should provide technical and financial assistance for the implementation of the CBD Tourism Guidelines.
22. International organisations should pay special regard to the CBD Tourism Guidelines when preparing, approving and funding tourism development projects.

We recommend that people and governments of the Central and Eastern European countries consider ways and means, through local, national and international co-ordination and co-operation, to implement the actions included in this Declaration so that sustainable tourism development of mountains and enhanced well-being of mountain communities are achieved.