

The Ninh Binh Declaration
on
Spiritual Tourism for Sustainable Development

The Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, the tourism ministers and other officials from UNWTO Member States, the representatives of tourism industry, international organizations, the civil society and international experts, met in Ninh Binh, Vietnam, on 21-22 November 2013, on the occasion of the *International Conference on Spiritual Tourism for Sustainable Development*.

Bearing in mind that the fundamental aim of the UNWTO is “the promotion and development of tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity, and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms”, as set out in the Statutes of the Organization;

Inspired by the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 1999, and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution of 21 December 2001, whose Article 1 underlines that “the understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism;

Having also considered the UNESCO Convention of 16 November 1972 concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage; the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2 November 2001; the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of 17 October 2003; and; the UNESCO Convention of 2005 on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions;

Cognizant of the Hue Declaration on Cultural Tourism & Poverty Alleviation, adopted at the homonymous Ministerial Conference held in Hue, Viet Nam, on 11-12 June 2004;

Acknowledging the Conclusions of the International Conference “Tourism, Religions and the Dialogue of Cultures”, held in Cordoba, Spain, from 29 to 31 October 2007;

Aware of the Spirit of Bali Statement, adopted at the Seminar “Tourism Ethics for Asia and the Pacific: Responsible Tourism and its Socio-Economic Impact on Local Communities”, held in Bali, Indonesia, on 11 June 2010;

Recognizing the *Yerevan Declaration* of 19 October 2012, adopted in the Republic of Armenia, on the occasion of the International Conference “Universal Values and Cultural Diversity in the 21st century: How can tourism make a difference?”;

THE PARTICIPANTS

Considering the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism as a useful instrument to guide the development of equitable, responsible and sustainable tourism worldwide which contributes to the preservation of intrinsic spiritual, cultural and social values of individuals, communities and nations;

Convinced that the human interaction spurred by spiritual tourism prompts dialogue, builds intercultural understanding, celebrates diversity and serves to enhance personal enrichment and collective fulfillment;

Aware of the rich spiritual and living cultural traditions with which the countries of Asia are endowed, and convinced of the need for these to be duly researched and preserved if they are to survive in the globalized world and contribute to community empowerment on a long-term basis;

Also recognizing that spiritual tourism can have a significant positive impact on the region's socio-economic growth if it is guided by responsible and sustainable development principles, which implies that profit seeking should not be the absolute priority;

Further acknowledging that spiritual tourism growth also carries with it concrete responsibilities of all stakeholders to minimize any potentially negative effects on host communities, their cultural identity and their natural environment,

THEREFORE UNANIMOUSLY AGREE TO UNDERTAKE THEIR EFFORTS IN ORDER TO:

1. Strengthen policy framework, responsible business operations and research on spiritual tourism, in close cooperation with local communities, with the aim to ensure benefits for all stakeholder while keeping the traditions as intact as possible;
2. Create adequate conditions for a responsible and sustainable use of living cultural assets in the development of spiritual tourism so as to create new employment opportunities, enhance product diversification, curb rural flight migration, and nurture a sense of pride among tradition bearers and local population in general;
3. Encourage education, training as well as specially-tailored capacity-building in order to empower communities with tourism & hospitality management and decision-making skills involving their spiritual and cultural traditions;
4. Promote and support socio-economic advancement of vulnerable groups through spiritual tourism development, in particular of indigenous people, ethnic minorities, women, youth and people with disabilities;
5. Cooperate at regional level in order to preserve and exchange concepts of the worldwide renowned oriental philosophy of human wellbeing which fosters the harmony of body, mind and spirit, thus ensuring the survival of ancestral traditions for future generations.

Adopted in Ninh Binh, Viet Nam, on 22 November 2013