INTRODUCTION

In decision IV/15, the COP requested Parties to submit information on current threats to biological diversity from tourism activities; basic approaches, strategies and instruments to demonstrate where tourism and conservation are mutually supportive; the involvement of the private sector, local and indigenous communities in establishing sustainable practices; regional and subregional level collaboration; infrastructure planning for tourism incorporating consideration of the CBD; and relevant policies and activities on sustainable tourism in order to initiate a process of exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practices.

In decision IV/16 on institutional matters and the programme of work, COP4 included sustainable use as one of the three focal areas for consideration by COP5 in May 2000.

SBSTTA4 will consider approaches and practices for sustainable use of biological resources, including tourism.

Although tourism is the focus of SBSTTA4, IUCN believes that sustainable use is a complex issue that needs to be considered in a comprehensive manner. SBSTTA5 will broaden the scope and will consider sustainable use in the broader context. Sustainable tourism represents one of a suite of regimes under which the biological and cultural resources of a country may be used in a sustainable manner.

Wild living resources have many values which can provide incentives for conservation that complement the conservation estate. Use of these resources, if sustainable and structured appropriately, is an important conservation tool because the social and economic benefits derived from such use can provide incentives for people to conserve them. Where economic, and/or social and cultural values can be attached to a wild living resource, perverse incentives removed, and costs and benefits internalized, favorable conditions can be created for investment in the conservation and the sustainable use of the resource, thereby reducing the risk of resource degradation, depletion, and habitat conversion.

On the basis of analysing various use systems in a number of different contexts, the Sustainable Use Initiative of IUCN has concluded that a complex and interactive array of biological, social, cultural, and economic factors operate to influence the sustainability of resource use. Notwithstanding the complex interactive nature of these factors, the following conditions are beginning to emerge as critical conditions that enhance the sustainability of biodiversity uses:

- institutional structures for appropriately scaled management that provide both positive incentives, negative sanctions and good governance;
- management systems that take account of land tenure, access rights, regulatory systems, traditional knowledge, and customary law;
- local peoples’ participation in all phases of the operation from planning to implementation;
- equitable sharing and greater in situ concentration of benefits;
- effective and regular monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms; and
• capacity to adjust management based on monitoring results.

Following from regional analyses and examination of a number of particular case studies, it is apparent that tenure – the way in which people hold, or do not hold, individually or collectively, exclusive rights to land and all or part of the resources above or below its surface – is one of the principal factors determining the evolutionary changes to landscapes, the way in which resources are managed and used, and the manner in which the benefits of such use are distributed (Oglethorpe, 1999).

Although clearly defined tenurial rights and responsibilities that suit particular social, cultural and economic circumstances are fundamental to achieving sustainable use, these must be accompanied by supportive policies and incentives, and institutions that provide for negotiated levels of accountability.

DEFINING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Much has been written about sustainable tourism in recent years. Tourism/travel/recreation is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing industries. It is a complex, multidisciplinary, multisectoral activity, and thus difficult to define. Its social, economic and environmental impacts – both positive and negative – at the global, regional and local levels are immense and highly complex. In 1995 the World Tourism Organisation, the World Travel and Tourism Council and the Earth Council adopted a joint declaration “Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry: Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development”. It is a draft action programme for the tourism industry and includes the following principles:

- tourism should help people live a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature;
- tourism should contribute to the conservation, protection and rehabilitation of ecosystems;
- protection of the environment should be an integral component of tourism development;
- tourism should be planned at the local level and allow for the participation of the citizens;
- tourism should recognise and support the identity, culture and interests of indigenous peoples;
- international agreements to protect the environment should be respected by the tourism industry (WTO, 1995);

Of particular relevance to CBD objectives is nature-based tourism and recreation which is directly dependent on natural resources in a relatively undeveloped state. In particular, ecotourism defined as "environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples" (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996) is an important growth sector. It often focuses on protected areas, and brings increasing numbers of visitors to these biologically valuable sites. Visitor impact management in protected areas poses a major challenge in the realisation of sustainable nature-based tourism.

Ecotourism is the preferred type of tourism in protected areas, and is an important subset of the broader concept of sustainable tourism. It is one of the few options that governments (at all levels), NGOs and local communities are discussing worldwide. Ecotourism is seen as an acceptable alternative way of deriving income from the environment with less impacts than many traditional "extractive" landuses.

Goals and guidelines for tourism which enhance environmental sustainability and enrich human spirit, quality of life for the host and visitor can contribute to sustainable tourism and increase economic viability.

EXISTING POLICY / GUIDELINES ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Many fora of national and international conservation agencies, tourism organisations and governments have developed various codes, guidelines and declarations on different aspects of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism (ECONETT). While well intentioned, most are either not based on research, or are extrapolated
from research in other fields.

The International Conference of Ministers on Biological Diversity and Tourism, held in Berlin March 1997, produced the "Berlin Declaration" which contains recommendations for biological diversity and sustainable tourism. They are based on compliance with the objectives, principles and obligations of the CBD. They promote tourist activities that directly or indirectly support the conservation of nature and biological diversity, the need to protect the integrity of ecosystems and habitats, the need to avoid additional tourism uses in areas that are already under stress, the need for planning and environment impact assessments, the need to develop and use environmentally friendly technologies in the field of tourism, and the respective responsibility of governments, international organisations, the private sector and environmental organisations in the field of tourism (UNEP, 1998).

The Commission on Sustainable Development will address tourism at its seventh session, in April 1999. It is hoped that biodiversity considerations regarding tourism development under the process of CBD will be taken fully into account, particularly those forms of tourism and recreation directly dependent on natural resources in a relatively undeveloped state.

CITES Resolution 10.6 raises concerns about the impact of tourist souvenir trade on populations of threatened animal and plant species, and proposes some strengthening of relevant procedures. The resolution also calls for action by governments and the need for public awareness. CITES controls and promotes collaboration between governments, the tourism industry and others (CITES, 1997) IUCN believes that SBSTTA needs to build on existing work and that its recommendations to COP5 need to ensure that duplication of efforts is avoided.

**ISSUES**

In considering tourism and biodiversity, SBSTTA needs to take into account that:

- The travel and tourism industry is one of the worlds’ largest and fastest growing industries. Despite the major economic downturn in Asia, tourism in 1998 maintained its share of GDP at 11.6%, estimated to be worth US$3,447.5 billion (WTTC, 1999).

- In the USA between 10% and 24% of visitation in 1995 was directly related to protected areas (TWAC, 1996).

- In most countries, domestic travel, recreation and leisure involve significantly greater numbers of people and economic activity than international tourism, with estimates ranging from 2 to 10 times the volume. Domestic tourism involves much of the same infrastructure and the same activities, and has the same propensity to cause an impact. Therefore consideration needs to be given to all types of recreation and leisure regardless of whether people have travelled internationally, or within their own country or region, day trippers or overnight stay. Hence the term "visitor" is in this context more appropriate than "tourist".

- Terms such as "nature-based" and "ecotourism" might limit the scope of application of this document to tourism in protected areas. The need for biodiversity conservation goes well beyond protected and even natural areas. For this reason, it is important to achieve sustainable tourism practices in every type of tourism, including mass tourism at beaches and in big cities. Also, tourism in most of its forms relies heavily on natural assets – views, landscapes, settings, wildlife, waterways, etc., and derives significant economic benefits from the intrinsic worth of these "natural" goods. Therefore, benefits from tourism should be reinvested in the natural assets it relies on.

- Despite the many charters, declarations and guidelines for Sustainable Tourism, the practices of this global industry have changed little. Systems of management and control are not often equipped to predict, measure or monitor often complex, subtle and cumulative impacts on biodiversity, in either the short or long term. Environmental costs typically are externalized.

- Tourism as a complex global activity requires planning and management to be conducted within the framework of ecological needs and economic, political and social realities of both the host destination and the range of source markets. For example:
"Host communities" are not homogenous; the members have not all necessarily lived there for generations; they are not static; they might not necessarily have great concern for the integrity of their natural, built or social environment; and may be divided in their opinion about tourism. So the broad principle of "consulting local communities" to ensure a more sustainable form of tourism is not sufficient. Processes of consultation which allow for a wide cross section of groups and interests, and encourage participation are needed.

"Visitors" are also a very diverse group who vary greatly in the level of education, motivation for travel, and awareness and sensitivity to issues pertinent to sustainable use of biological resources. Approaches to managing and educating visitors need to cater for such diversity and be tailored to multiple audiences.

Issues of "traditional use" of biological resources, land rights, and ownership are central to notions of authenticity, which is a valued tourism asset. Careful consideration is thus required in planning and developing tourism activities that involve traditional communities to ensure prior consent, participation in all the processes, respect of traditions, and benefit-sharing, taking into account the different interest groups within these communities.

The concept of "nature" is socially constructed, and varies in time across cultural, political and social beliefs and economic status. This influences the values placed on nature and what is regarded as priority for protection and acceptable use.

Most tourism relies on the natural environment regardless of location – urban, coastal, rural or wilderness, and regardless of the type of tourism – nature-based, ecotourism or mass. Very often natural attributes provide the background or setting if not the product. All types of tourism have impacts on the conservation of nature and biodiversity.

Benefits Of Sustainable Tourism

Tourism based on biodiversity principles can bring numerous benefits, including:

- encouraging sustainable use of lands rich in biodiversity but with marginal value for agriculture or forestry, thereby enabling large tracts of land to remain covered in natural vegetation;
- generating greater employment and revenue on a long-term sustainable perspective, especially in rural areas, reducing pressure on marginal lands, and migration to crowded urban areas;
- promoting conservation action through raising awareness of decision makers and the public of the importance of biodiversity-rich natural areas to generating tourism income;
- stimulating investment in environmentally sound infrastructure and best management practice of tourism in natural areas;
- developing environmentally sound attitudes, through interpretation and environmental education;
- developing a conservation constituency in society through opportunity to experience natural areas; and
- increasing added value of biodiversity through different types of nature-based tourism.

The following issues need to be considered to ensure an efficient and equitable distribution of benefits:

- A reasonable proportion of financial returns from tourism should be returned to "host destinations" for social wellbeing and environment conservation. The protection of biodiversity benefits both the host community and the visitor; the allocation of a percentage of income to conservation needs to be equitable.
- In addition to direct economic benefits, such as employment and income for local residents, other tangible benefits that need to be shared include access to better roads, potable water, telecommunications systems, improvements to education and health facilities. Desirable benefits that cannot be expressed in monetary terms include increased sense of place, pride in local knowledge, and conservation of traditions.
The long term investment in local human capital through the generation of local capabilities should increasingly enable locals to manage the different aspects of tourism, leaving more money in the host community and boosting the local skills base related to management, services, and activities such as guiding.

Threats from Tourism

Many aspects of tourism operation can simultaneously have positive and negative impacts. Stakeholders need to facilitate and encourage the development of a tourism industry that supports conservation and assists with its financing, and management to avoid the following treats:

- As quality natural areas shrink they become more desirable, and levels of visitation increase, threatening the attraction by exceeding both the biological and social carrying capacity.

- Infrastructure requirements such as airports, roads, carparks and hotels can have negative impacts on the environment and may divert resources from conservation, particularly from protected areas. In addition, demand for land can increase the price of land and housing, causing economic difficulties for local residents.

- Infrastructure may also impose social impacts such as a major change to architectural style of a place, tall buildings may block views or cause shading, and traffic may increase noise pollution.

- Local people may lose interest in conservation efforts if they are perceived as being primarily for the benefit of visitors.

- Authorities may seek to maximise short term economic returns from biodiversity-rich protected areas through inappropriate developments, diminishing the biodiversity values, and shifting the priority from conservation to tourism.

- Consumptive demand from tourism for biological resources, such as food fish and a variety of wild plant and animal parts and products as curios/souvenirs can drive unsustainable use.

- Increasing demand from tourism for local agricultural products can lead to increases in prices of food for locals. This is particularly likely for areas where lands are already marginal (McNeely, 1997). Likewise, visitors may make excessive demands on available water supplies, thereby imposing costs on local communities.

- As tourism is a highly competitive industry, with all sectors and individual businesses striving to maximise economic returns, contribution to the maintenance of biodiversity is often not a priority. In some nations, particularly small island states, which are particularly popular for tourism and increasingly dependant on the tourist dollar for foreign exchange, the natural environment is most vulnerable to short term economic decision making. For example, limited water supplies are threatened by development of tourism infrastructure, visitor usage and sewerage discharge. Tourism can also lead to the introduction of invasive species which readily threaten native biological diversity. Customs and quarantine practices, developed against human and economic diseases and pests, are inadequate safeguards against "alien" species.

Efforts to manage visitor impacts have evolved into useful concepts such as "Limits of Acceptable Use", but determining such limits is difficult for a number of reasons. Tourism is rarely the only human activity affecting an environment, it relies on many attributes of the environment, and it involves multi-user and multipurpose situations. All these elements are dynamic. Without established monitoring regimes and appropriate indicators it is impossible to determine the extent of either the benefits or the threats, other than perhaps the economic impacts which are most readily assessed.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Task Force on Tourism of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) of IUCN has developed the following guiding principles:
Nature has limits, but the interactions are complex and incremental damage and losses may be very difficult to assess in the short term. Some environments are inherently more fragile than others.

Planning for tourism development must be integrated with other planning efforts at the site (e.g., protected areas), regional (e.g., regional land-use plans), and national (e.g., National Biodiversity Strategies) levels, applying tools such as strategic environmental assessment and integrated resource management.

Tourism use of sites needs to be managed to planning limits based on conservative estimates of sustainable use and regular monitoring to conserve the health of the environment.

Future development of tourism policies should include a more decentralised approach to planning and management that is underpinned by greater participation of local authorities and peoples in the decision making process and greater attention to fostering partnership arrangements between entrepreneurs and local peoples, landholders and/or communities.

Sustainable tourism requires impact assessment procedures that address biological and socio-economic aspects, and effective monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

The environmental and social impacts of tourism are numerous. They frequently extend well beyond the development site itself. The tourism industry needs to address negative impacts and enhance positive impacts to ensure that the primary resource is maintained in its natural condition. Operating/regulating at an ecosystem/bioregional level and, often, sub-regional level, may be required. For example, pollution of streams may have impacts on marine ecotourism such as dolphin watching or marine diving tours.

Procedures should be in place to prevent unintentional introduction of species across biogeographical boundaries. Special care needs to be exercised when islands or areas of high endemism are the tourism destinations/attractions (see IUCN paper on alien invasive species in this package).

The IUCN concept of categories for protected areas and the UNESCO biosphere reserve concept are useful management tools for achieving conservation objectives at different levels of protection while ensuring sustainable tourism practices.

Tourism operating at a bioregional or ecosystem scale and planning at that can help spread the impact from visitors on protected areas to a range of destinations on private and public lands.

Sustainable tourism should contribute to the conservation of biological diversity through improved management, financial returns, and increased awareness and stewardship.

Community acceptance and awareness of the conservation benefits of sustainable tourism can be built through appropriate involvement in all phases of tourism development.

Sustainable tourism has the capacity to co-exist rather than compete with or displace traditional practices and uses of biodiversity. Appropriate local regulations are needed to protect traditional land use against escalating land values brought about by successful tourism.

Specialist forms of nature-based tourism should conform to all the principles of sustainable tourism. For example wildlife tourism should contribute to the conservation of the biodiversity of species, not threaten these.

Sustainable tourism should contribute to improving the well-being of local people in terms of income generation and access to resources and services, while recognizing and respecting their identity, culture and interests.

It is essential to manage tourism so as to maximise both the visitor satisfaction and local distribution of benefits while minimising negative social and environmental impacts.

Sustainable tourism should promote an increased participation of stakeholders, particularly local communities, in the proposal, planning, implementation and evaluation of tourism development initiatives.
• It is essential to provide increased opportunities for processes of discussion amongst all stakeholders to clarify and agree on respective roles, rights and responsibilities regarding tourism development initiatives.

• The development and operation of nature-based tourism should be reviewed regularly with appropriate feedback, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that the integrity of the natural assets upon which the operation is based are not compromised. This principle should apply regardless of the area (protected or otherwise). Management should be adaptive, incorporating monitoring and the ability to modify management to take account of risk and uncertainty.

• The indicators of the success of tourism, that is, the positive impact, should be expanded beyond the traditional indicators of growth in visitor numbers, financial contribution to GDP, and number of jobs created, to include for example:

  • increased area of open space;
  • increased funding for conservation management of landscapes, ecosystems and wildlife;
  • increased – even exclusive -- use of endemic or native species for landscaping;
  • establishment of green corridors in urban developments;
  • use of low-energy transport, accommodation, and related activities;
  • increased use of sustainable products, technologies and practices in tourism infrastructure;
  • increased regeneration and restoration of degraded areas;
  • benefits obtained by indigenous and local communities (income, employment, etc.);
  • utilisation of local renewable resources for construction and sustenance; and
  • increased awareness and concern for local natural and social history.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

IUCN recommends that SBSTTA4:

• examines the results of CSD7 to avoid duplication and that it identifies specific contributions to the CSD process on the biodiversity aspects of sustainable tourism, including principles and best practice. When considering principles, the draft UNEP principles on sustainable tourism should be considered as well as those contained in this document. For best practice, SBSTTA4 should recommend to COP5 the continuation of the activities contained in decision IV/15 paragraph 14 to promote experience exchange and draw lessons learned on the institutional, educational and legal requirements of sustainable tourism. This information should also be made available to the clearing-house mechanism.

Further, IUCN calls on SBSTTA4 to recommend that COP5:

• ensures that the work being carried out in the context of the CBD on developing indicators and impact assessment procedures considers the need to assess success/failure of tourism in achieving the objectives of the CBD, in collaboration with relevant institutions such as the World Tourism Organisation and the Task Force on Tourism of IUCN-WCPA.

• notes that 2002 is the International Year of Ecotourism and identifies mechanisms for contributing to this event, in collaboration with relevant institutions such as those mentioned above.

IUCN recommends that Parties consider at the national level the following actions:

- integrate planning for tourism development within NBSAP and other plans developed in the context of the CBD with special attention to protected areas plans;
- research the process to integrate tourism and conservation more effectively into regional development planning;
- incorporate biodiversity concerns into national tourism plans, and prepare guidelines for doing so (to support implementation of CBD Article 6b);
- work with the tourism industry to educate the public and the industry about the conservation benefits of responsible tourism, and the need to plan and manage at a bioregional level;
- research the limits of acceptable use (both biological and social), identify appropriate indicators for the impact of recreation and tourism in a range of settings, under different environmental and user conditions, establish reliable and effective monitoring programmes and determine appropriate control mechanisms;
- research the trends and lessons learned from the many different arrangements and joint ventures devised in recent years between the public and private sectors and communities to utilise ecotourism as a sustainable form of economic activity;
- ensure the achievement of the conservation objectives of protected areas such as those suggested in IUCN Protected Area Management Categories, when defining tourism strategies; any tourism use is to be constrained by the different degrees of protection assigned to different categories of protected areas;
- explore and develop incentive measures for tourism which maximize benefits to conservation and people while reducing negative impacts;
- examine the development of guidelines/standards/accreditation schemes based on empirical research that identify and encourage tourism that supports biodiversity conservation;
- examine the development of guidelines that encourage tourism to protect wildlife;
- explore, develop and monitor appropriate mechanisms for involving and entrusting stakeholders with roles in tourism development;
- strengthen and expand Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures (legislative/regulatory) to include economic, social and cultural impacts of all types of tourism development projects, regardless of location/site, and establish a set of appropriate indicators of success of tourism and to consider off-site, cumulative and long term impacts; increase in-country expertise to undertake EIAs; and
- work with a wide range of relevant international industry associations with the goal of significantly reducing the risk that tourism facilitates the introduction of invasive species.

Parties might also want to consider mechanisms such as "Environmental Guarantee Funds" (EGF) as a legislated requirement of EIA or any other permit system of all tourism developments. The intent is to help biodiversity/natural resource managers capture economic return not just at the initial development phase, but continually while a tourism operation occurs. This could embrace the notion of "enterprise bargain agreements" which create a flexible framework negotiated at the local level with each individual developer, according to location, scale, type of activity proposed, level of visitation, and nature of operation.

These parameters would be subdivided. For example, "Location" could be sub-divided into:

- level of biodiversity
- unique heritage (cultural or natural)
- proximity to a protected area / World Heritage site
- climatic conditions

In order to determine the "biological value and demand" of the development, the EGF could have a locally established financial value which can either be paid into a conservation fund or offset by the achievement at
the negotiated level against the locally determined “CBD compatible indicators of successful tourism” on an annual and continuing basis.

REFERENCES

Ceballos-Lascurain, H. 1996. **Tourism, Ecotourism & Protected Areas.** IUCN, Gland


European Community Network for Environmental Travel and Tourism (ECONETT) has a comprehensive listing. [http://www.wttc.org](http://www.wttc.org)


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**For further information, please contact:**

Robyn **Bushell**

IUCN – World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Task Force on Tourism

WHO Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health

Faculty of Environmental Management and Agriculture

University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury

Richmond, NSW 2753, Australia

tel: +61 2 4570-1562

fax: +61 2 4570-1207

e-mail: r.bushell@uws.edu.au

Martha **Chouchena-Rojas**

Biodiversity Policy Coordination Division

IUCN - The World Conservation Union

Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland, Switzerland
tel.: +41 22 999-0290
fax: +41 22 999-0025
e-mail: mtr@hq.iucn.org

Robert W G Jenkins
IUCN Sustainable Use Initiative
C/o Environment Australia
GPO Box 787
Canberra, ACT 2601 Australia
tel: +612 6274-2392
fax: +612 6274-2243
e-mail: hank.jenkins@ea.gov.au