

World Tourism Organization

Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

INTRODUCTION

1. The World Tourism Leaders convened by the World Tourism Organization at a meeting on the Social Impact of Tourism, in Manila (Philippines) on 22 May 1997 committed themselves to "work towards the formulation and eventual adoption of a Global Code of Ethics for Tourism". This proposal appears in the draft programme of work of the Organization for the period 1998-1999. It was based on the recommendation of the Quality Support Committee made at its second meeting (Madrid, 28-29 October 1996) as a follow-up to suggestions from various member States which took part in the work programme survey.

2. It is fundamental to recall that in 1985 (Sofia, sixth General Assembly) WTO adopted the Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code which basically focuses on the responsibility of States (including sections relating to "the populations constituting the host communities") and the travelling individual. It is also noteworthy that the political emphasis of this document was set on the rights to rest and leisure and the freedom to travel while also advocating, as a second priority, the desired humane nature and content of tourism. Both domestic and international tourism as well as its environmental and social aspects were addressed

3. The document was not legally binding and did not provide for a follow-up mechanism. It is supposed, however, that it was used by various governments and organizations and also inspired certain laws, regulations and tourism policy documents. The evidence is that on many occasions the WTO Secretariat had to furnish the document on demand to tourism policy makers and professional bodies as well as non-governmental organizations and that there are numerous references to it in literature. Nevertheless, its direct effective impact on tourism practices may be considered as rather minor.

4. It also inspired WTO itself to develop a series of technical publications setting standards of environment protection, as well as a few tourism policy documents such as the Recommended Measures for Tourism Safety, Creating Tourism Opportunities for Handicapped People in the Nineties (Buenos Aires, 1991), Health Formalities and Information in International Travel (Bali, 1993), and the WTO Statement on the Prevention of Organized Sex Tourism (Cairo, 1995).

5. The latter document is an example of the new challenges that tourism development and society have to face. And there are many others That was seen especially in the environment area which prompted many tourism organizations to draw up environmental codes of conduct Other approaches were developed at both national and international levels, such as attempts in 1990 to adopt a Code for Tourists by the European Commission, and a Model Municipal Tourism Policy by the then United States Travel and Tourism Administration. In each instance it was insisted that the resulting documents should be non-obligatory or for illustrative purposes.

6. More recent and current approaches aimed at corporate and business community at the national level are developed by NGOs, among others, in France by Groupe Developpment and in the United Kingdom by Tourism Concern. In each case this work is carried out at the request of the business community concerned. Both groups have a approached WTO with a view to contribute to WTO work in this area. This offer was also received from a coalition of non-governmental organizations operating in Western Europe called TEN which held a consultation in Madrid with the WTO Management right after the World Tourism Leaders' Meeting in Manila.

7. These and other developments at various levels, including the highest one such as the recent United Nations Conference on Agenda 21 which WTO addressed suggest that once again WTO is expected to take the lead and proceed to designing a firm, overall Code for Tourism which would establish global ethics in respect of the continuous and new challenges faced by tourism development which is also global. There are expectations that there should be a guiding and instrument authority for such development.

Content of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

8. The new instrument will be able to balance the responsibilities of all the social agents involved in tourism development:

- States/Governments (including local administration)
- Private Enterprise
- The Travelling individual
- The Host Community

9. It can equally address the three inter-related aspects of tourism development:

- environmental
- social
- economic

The social aspect here is meant to cover tourism's accessibility, content and role for and in society, in particular its culture, religion, ways of life, traditions and customs, and the observance of human rights.

Implementation

10. In contrast with past declarations the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is expected to allow for measuring its application. Without pretending to be another international convention demanding a legal machinery which traditionally tends to be heavy and bureaucratic - and often not even promising effective compliance, it could still have an ambition to make its provisions obligatory to the extent possible, although not legally binding. Leaving the new instrument without a measure to check on its implementation quite possibly would lead to its disregard and the failure to meet the existing expectations about the Code authority and applicability.

11. This can possibly be achieved or at least facilitated by introducing two elements to the Code:

(a) appropriate language

(b) implementation mechanism

12. Before being formally passed by the WTO General Assembly, the instrument should have been consulted and received wide acceptance at the various levels, both public and operational. The aim would be not to impose it, but adopt a code already known and largely assumed by the principal agents and their representatives.

Language

13. It is necessary to depart from stereotyped, ceremonial and mentor-like language

which is characteristic of so many past declarations. A combination of clear, measurable principles and the ready-to-use check-lists to be applied to tourism projects and developments could be an answer to this concern.

14. When establishing principles and check-lists, their operational meaning should be clearly defined to allow comprehension and assessment by ordinary citizens concerned about tourism development. In order to formulate principles, sometimes it may be necessary to support them by identifiable research. This is due to the fact that certain principles, although reflecting popular beliefs may be not taken for granted and at times questioned.

15. Given an international vocation of the Code, it is also important to use in it the terms and terminology to be understood to various cultures. Special care should therefore be given to its translation.

Implementation

16. Various simultaneous elements could be used to assist in the Code application:

(a) receiving commitments to apply the Code by the bodies concerned (governments, tourism industry organizations, tourism investors, municipalities, etc.)

(b) establishing an independent body to receive and deal with information on the application of the Code

(c) cooperation with NGOs in the field to monitor the application of the Code

(d) recognition and prizes awarded by the Organization in cooperation with other bodies for socially responsible tourism projects

(e) involving travellers, in particular through consumer organizations and tourism clubs, in the Code implementation

(f) introducing systematic reporting on the implementation of the Code according to established criteria

Preparation of the Code by WTO

17. The 12th General Assembly of WTO could create a special Committee . for the

Preparation of the Code of Ethics for Tourism. This Committee would be related to the Quality Support Committee, a subsidiary, body of the Executive Council. The Committee would establish its own terms of reference (including timetable) and elect its president from among the personalities who would like to assist the Secretariat in preparing the draft Code. Those willing to voluntarily form part of the Committee may wish to notify it to the Secretary General of WTO prior to the General Assembly. At the Secretariat level, the work will be coordinated by the Deputy Secretary-General.

18. Following the General Assembly, the preparation of the Code would regularly feature on the agenda of all Regional Commissions and would be systematically reviewed by the Quality Support Committee and the Executive Council. In addition to the Special Committee members notified to the Secretary-general, the Commissions may designate their own representatives to this committee to ensure geographical balance.

19. The preparation of the first draft could be entrusted to an independent consultant who would take stock of the existing instruments already adopted or being prepared by other bodies at different levels. The consultant would take care of substantiating the respective provisions of the Code by research when necessary or would indicate where such research may be needed.

20. For reasons of economy and the need to use expertise where available, WTO could benefit, whenever feasible from the various meetings organized by the Organizations or to which it is invited, to consult the draft with the bodies concerned. Such meetings could also be used to obtain acceptance of the provisions in point and to consult the possibility of commitments to apply the instrument by these bodies.

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