

BERLIN DECLARATION
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

International Conference of Environment Ministers on Biodiversity and Tourism

Berlin, 1997

Aware that tourism is an important source of economic wealth and one of the fastest growing sectors in the world economy;

Considering that tourism is a world-wide phenomenon involving a growing number of people undertaking more long-distance journeys;

Recognizing that a healthy environment and beautiful landscapes constitute the basis of long-term viable development of all tourism activities;

Observing that tourism increasingly turns to areas where nature is in a relatively undisturbed state so that a substantial number of the world's remaining natural areas are being developed for tourism activities;

Concerned that while tourism may importantly contribute to socio-economic development and cultural exchange, it has, at the same time, the potential for degrading the natural environment, social structures and cultural heritage;

Taking into account that sustainable forms of tourism generate income also for local communities, including indigenous communities, and that their interests and culture require particular attention;

Recognizing also that tourism may generate or increase a demand for wild animals, plants or products made thereof for souvenirs, and thus endanger species and affect protection measures;

Further recognizing that there is a need to value and protect nature and biological diversity as an essential basis for sustainable development;

Convinced that nature has an intrinsic value which calls for the conservation of species, genetic and ecosystem diversity to ensure the maintenance of essential life support systems;

Furthermore convinced that sustainable forms of tourism have the potential to contribute to the conservation of biological diversity outside and inside protected areas;

Bearing in mind that vulnerable areas, including small islands, coasts, mountains, wetlands, grasslands and other terrestrial and marine ecosystems and habitats of outstanding beauty and rich biological diversity, deserve special measures of protection;

Convinced that achieving sustainable forms of tourism is the responsibility of all stakeholders involved, including government at all levels, international organizations, the private sector, environmental groups and citizens both in tourism destination countries and countries of origin;

Determined to work together with all who are involved in the elaboration of international guidelines or rules that harmonize the interests of nature conservation and tourism, that lead towards sustainable development of tourism, and, thus, contribute to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the objectives of Agenda 21;

AGREE ON THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

1.GENERAL

1.Tourism activities should be environmentally, economically, socially and culturally sustainable. Development and management of tourism activities should be guided by the objectives, principles and commitments laid down in the Convention on Biological Diversity.

2.Tourism activities which directly or indirectly contribute to the conservation of nature and biological diversity and which benefit local communities should be promoted by all stakeholders.

3.To conserve nature and biological diversity as a major resource of tourism activities, all necessary measures should be taken to ensure that the integrity of ecosystems and habitats is always respected. Additional burdens

from tourism development should be avoided in areas where nature is already under pressure from tourism activities. Preference should be given to the modernization and renovation of existing tourism facilities.

4.Measures inspired by the principle of precautionary action should be taken to prevent and minimize damage caused by tourism to biological diversity. Such measures should include monitoring of existing activities and assessment of environmental impacts of proposed new activities, including the monitoring of the negative effects of wildlife viewing.

5.Tourism activities which use environmentally sound technologies for saving water and energy, prevent pollution, treat waste water, avoid the production of solid waste and encourage recycling should be promoted to the fullest extent. Similarly, tourism activities which encourage the use of public and non-motorised transport should be supported wherever possible.

6.All stakeholders including governments, international organizations, the private sector and environmental groups should recognize their common responsibilities to achieve sustainable forms of tourism. Policies and, where appropriate, legislation, environmental economic instruments and incentives should be developed to ensure that tourism activities meet the needs of nature and biological diversity conservation, including mobilizing funding from tourism. The private sector should be encouraged to develop and apply guidelines and codes of conduct for sustainable tourism. All stakeholders should cooperate locally, nationally and internationally to achieve a common understanding on the requirements of sustainable tourism. Particular attention should be given to trans boundary areas and areas of international importance.

7.Concepts and criteria of sustainable tourism should be developed and incorporated in education and training programs for tourism professionals. The general public should be informed and educated about the benefits of protecting nature and conserving biodiversity through sustainable forms of tourism. Results of research and concepts of sustainable tourism should be increasingly disseminated and implemented.

2.SPECIFIC

1.Inventories of tourism activities and attractions should be developed, taking into account the impacts on ecosystems and biological diversity. Coordinated efforts of governments, the private sector and all other stakeholders should be undertaken to agree on criteria to measure and assess the impacts of tourism on nature and biological diversity. In this regard, technical and scientific cooperation should be established through the clearing house mechanism of the Convention on Biodiversity.

2.Tourism activities, including tourism planning, measures to provide tourism infrastructure, and tourism operations, which are likely to have significant impacts on nature and biological diversity should be subject to prior environmental impact assessments.

3.Tourism activities should be planned at the appropriate levels with a view to integrate socioeconomic, cultural and environmental considerations at all levels. Development, environment, and tourism planning should be integrated processes. All efforts should be made to ensure that integrated tourism plans are implemented and enforced.

4.Tourism should be based on environmentally friendly concepts and modes of transport. Negative impacts of transport on the environment should be reduced, paying particular attention to environmental impacts of road and air traffic, specifically in ecologically sensitive areas.

5.Sports and outdoor activities, including recreational hunting and fishing, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas, should be managed in a way that they fulfil the requirements of nature and biological diversity conservation and comply with the existing regulations on conservation and sustainable use of species.

6.Special care should be taken that living animals and plants, and products made thereof for souvenirs, are offered for sale only on the basis of a sustainable and environmentally sound use of the natural resources and in conformity with national legislation and international agreements.

7.Whenever possible and appropriate, economic instruments and incentives including awarding of prizes, certificates and eco-labels for sustainable tourism should be used to encourage the private sector to meet its responsibilities for achieving sustainable tourism. The abolition of economic incentives encouraging environmentally unfriendly activities should be strived for.

8.Tourism should be developed in a way so that it benefits the local communities, strengthens the local economy, employs local workforce and wherever ecologically sustainable, uses local materials, local agricultural

products and traditional skills. Mechanisms, including policies and legislation should be introduced to ensure the flow of benefits to local communities. Tourism activities should respect the ecological characteristics and capacity of the local environment in which they take place. All efforts should be made to respect traditional lifestyles and cultures.

9. Tourism should be restricted, and where necessary prevented, in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas. All forms of mass tourism should be avoided in those areas. Where existing tourism activities exceed the carrying capacity, all efforts should be made to reduce negative impacts from tourism activities and to take measures to restore the degraded environment.

10. Tourism in protected areas should be managed in order to ensure that the objectives of the protected area regimes are achieved. Wherever tourism activities may contribute to the achievement of conservation objectives in protected areas, such activities should be encouraged and promoted, also as cases to test in a controlled manner the impact of tourism on biodiversity. In highly vulnerable areas, nature reserves and all other protected areas requiring strict protection, tourism activities should be limited to a bearable minimum.

11. In coastal areas all necessary measures should be taken to ensure sustainable forms of tourism, taking into account the principles of integrated coastal area management. Particular attention should be paid to the conservation of vulnerable zones, such as small islands, coral reefs, coastal waters, mangroves, coastal wetlands, beaches and dunes.

12. Tourism in mountain areas should also be managed in environmentally appropriate ways. Tourism in sensitive mountain regions should be regulated so that the biological diversity of these areas can be preserved.

13. In all areas where nature is particularly diverse, vulnerable and attractive, all efforts should be made to meet the requirements of nature protection and biological diversity conservation. Particular attention should be paid to the conservation needs in forest areas, grasslands, fresh water ecosystems, areas of spectacular beauty, arctic and antarctic eco-systems.

14. The Ministers gathered in Berlin on 7 and 8 March, 1997, for the International Conference on Biodiversity and Tourism.

Recommend that the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity draw up in consultation with stakeholders guidelines or rules for sustainable tourism development on a global level on the basis of the "Berlin Declaration" in order to contribute to the implementation of the Convention's objectives,

Agree to submit the "Berlin Declaration" to all Parties and Signatory States with the objective of bringing about a discussion at the 4th Conference of the Parties in Bratislava,

Call upon the Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations to support this initiative under the Biodiversity Convention and recommend to the UN General Assembly Special Session to include the subject of sustainable tourism in the future work program of the Commission on Sustainable Development in order to draw increased attention to the objectives of Agenda 21,

Call on the bilateral and multilateral funding organizations to take into account the principles and guidelines of the "Berlin Declaration" when supporting projects relating to tourism.