

## MONTREAL DECLARATION

### BITS – Bureau International du Tourisme Social

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#### Preamble

What does social tourism mean today? How do the key players in social tourism perceive their role? What are their beliefs and ambitions? In the world today, what are the issues and the prospects facing us on the threshold of the third millennium?

Twenty-five years ago, in the Vienna Charter, BITS already set out the social, cultural, political and economic dimensions of tourism - a statement of fundamental significance for our time. In turn, the World Tourism Organization, in its Manila Declaration, formally confirmed the objectives of social tourism.

What will social tourism mean in the years to come? This is the crucial issue to be addressed in the Montreal Declaration.

#### **1. SOCIAL TOURISM: A high ideal in the face of discrimination and the challenge of integration.**

Today in a world in which growth in the wealthiest countries is spasmodic, and whole sections of the population suffer increasing deprivation, resulting in serious social unrest, in which advances in science and information technologies go hand in hand with a reduced workforce, opening up as yet undreamed-of social and cultural opportunities, in which large economic alliances are formed, operating according to their own free-market logic, in which some countries experience rapid growth, opening up to the possibility of domestic tourism, in which other countries, and even whole continents, are trapped in appalling poverty, in which the right to a search for meaning is claimed everywhere, in this world, tourism is growing rapidly. We are witnessing spectacular increase in business and leisure travel, the opening-up of borders, the diversification of destinations, and new means of communication and transport. Parallel to a global breakdown in the division between time devoted to work and time for leisure and travel, we are witness, in certain countries, to unacceptable forms of exploitation of local inhabitants, as extreme as the prostitution of children.

Art. 1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings have the right to rest, leisure time, a limit to working hours, and to paid holidays. This right is far from being universally accepted, the subjugation of leisure and tourism to the service of human needs must be vehemently pursued along the trail already blazed by social tourism, whose primary goal has always been access to travel and leisure opportunities for all.

Art. 2. The prime objective of all tourism development initiatives should be the full realization of each individual's potential, both as a person and as a citizen

#### **2. SOCIAL TOURISM: Advantages for tomorrow.**

- *Social tourism: "a shaper of society".*

Art. 3. The aim of making tourist leisure accessible to all - including families, youth and elders - necessarily means being involved in the struggle against inequality and the exclusion of the culturally different, those of limited means or abilities, or those who live in developing countries. To this end, specific measures need to be identified and implemented: the definition of social policies of tourism, the creation of infrastructures, the setting-up of support systems for the disadvantaged, awareness-raising and other staff training, etc. Modest initiatives, forming part of an overall strategy, can often be more effective "shapers of society" than large-scale projects.

Art. 4. Holidays and travel can provide particularly apt occasions for personal enrichment, through the discovery of new places, cultures and civilizations, through physical, artistic, sport and leisure activities, by meeting people across educational or generation divides, and by other responsibilities taken on freely by tourists. Social tourism operators wish to contribute to the improvement of human relationships, both through their training and their animation activities; social tourism is a vehicle for social cohesion.

- *Social tourism: a promoter of economic growth.*

Art. 5. Hundreds of millions of people around the world travel and are welcomed by social tourism, which appeals to all income and age groups. Social tourism flourishes in an economic climate informed by solidarity and social policy. In turn, social tourism offers, and will continue to do so to an increasing degree, an exceptional economic opportunity. Tourism for all is a key to economic strength. It generates a continuous flow of people and investment, which contributes to regional development, produces national and international wealth, and stimulates the transfer of resources from the richer economies to the poorer countries.

Art. 6. Tourism must benefit the whole community. Its benefits must contribute to the social and economic development of regions and citizens as a whole. The tourism sector should both provide employment and guarantee the fundamental rights of all employees.

Art. 7. All the key players in the development of tourism are subject to the same economic constraints. Whether as entrepreneurs, facility managers, tour organizers or guides, educators or entertainers, are all economic agents, subject to the same expectations of competence, professionalism and performance. The pursuit of a social development objective depends on exemplary management and improving results.

- *Social tourism: participation in the land management practices.*

Art. 8. Long before its promotion by international organizations, the concept of "sustainable development" had been adopted by social tourism and expressed in the following aims: reconcile tourism development, environmental protection and a respect for the identity of local communities; bring fresh resources into neglected regions; promote development without depletion of resources; generate local economic, social and cultural benefits. While tourism is, on a global scale, one of the engines for regional development, it should never lead to the uncontrolled invasion of an area, the exploitation of the local population, or the destruction of its culture.

Art. 9. Tourism can, and should, represent hope for many fragile economies. The protection of the natural environment has to withstand acquisitive pressure from organizations or individuals intent on commercial or personal gain.

Art. 10. Social tourism, as entrepreneur and manager of tourist development projects, plays a key role with regard to tourists. Its duty is to raise awareness, inform and to inculcate respect for the environment and local communities.

- *Social tourism: a partner in global development programs.*

Art. 11. The Stockholm Conference on Population and the Environment, the United Nations programs and the Rio Earth Summit, among others, have clearly identified the responsibilities of present generations in setting limits to growth. Tourism, when it is controlled and when it respects the natural environment and local communities, constitutes one of the economic, social and cultural hopes of many developing regions. For this reason, present and future social tourism operators are, and will be, wellplaced to devise development projects, put in place legal and financial frameworks, and contribute to the management, training programs and animation of all tourist projects planned for global development programs.

Art. 12. Throughout the world, new forms of cooperation and partnership are, and will be, essential, since tourist development requires the support of many local authorities, social organizations, trade unions, financial partners, family, youth, cultural, sport, and ecology movements, and, of course, professionals in the tourist industry, among which, social tourism operators serving the public good.

### **3. CRITERIA FOR A DEFINITION OF SOCIAL TOURISM**

Art. 13. Any tourist organization (association, cooperative, mutual society, foundation, federation, not-for-profit organization, company etc...) which, by its articles of association or statement of aims clearly identifies with social objectives and the aim of making travel and tourism accessible to the greatest number, - thereby differentiating itself from the sole aim of profit maximization - may claim membership of the social tourism movement. The word "social" may evoke an increased sense of solidarity and fraternity, and be a source of hope for those many people in the world today who still have no leisure time

Art. 14. The validity of this claim is subject to the following verifiable conditions:

1. The proposed activities bring together social, educational and cultural objectives favouring the respect and the development of the individual.
2. The target public is clearly identified, without discrimination on racial, cultural, religious, political, philosophical or social grounds.
3. A non-economic added-value forms an integral part of the proposed product.
4. A will to non disruptive integration into the local environment is clearly expressed.
5. The type of activity and the price are clearly indicated in the contract documents. Prices are compatible with the stated social objectives. Annual surpluses, in whole or in part, will be re-invested for the improvement of services offered to the public.
6. Personnel management is in accordance with social legislation, and undertakes to promote job satisfaction and deliver appropriate on-going staff development training.

Art. 15. Tourism operators cannot look for justification to statutes or procedures, but rather to their actions in pursuit of a clearly stated objective. Statutes vary indeed according to custom, practice and evolving legislation. It is only a means to an end. There is no single model in the world today.

## **Conclusions**

Whatever the acknowledged achievements and successes, a significant and lasting social tourism cannot exist without the formulation and long-term maintenance of truly socially-minded policies for tourism at the regional, national and international level. Those involved in social tourism intend to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of such policies.

Faithful to its origins, and facing the realities of today and the challenges of tomorrow, BITS intends to focus all its efforts to promote a social and human vision of tourism-related development.

BITS calls on all those who share that same vision for the future of men and women everywhere to work together for the achievement of these aims.