



Tourism Scan

Vol. 3 Issue 1 February 2006

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CONTENTS

- ▶ **WTO AND ALL THAT**

- ▶ **THE VITORIA STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE STRUGGLES OF LOCAL PEOPLES**

- ▶ **ECOT AT THE WCC ASSEMBLY**

- ▶ **UNEP'S SEVENTH GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM (7TH GCSF)**

- ▶ **CBD GUIDELINES- a discussion paper**

"The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism is a Chiangmai, Thailand based coalition of Regional Ecumenical Organisations and over seventy secular and faith-based groups. It seeks to unite people around collective efforts that negate the undesirable effects of modern tourism and, in its place, institute socially responsible and ethically oriented tourism. It believes that tourism must be based on justice and sustainability for host communities and that, therefore, tourism planning and practice must be democratised. ECOT advocates respect for the protection and dignity of the human rights of women, children, indigenous peoples and workers in the tourist trade. It opposes tourism projects that create environmental devastation."

From the Editor

After two months of silence from Tourism Scan, we are here to stay we are back. Our silence had just one reason. We moved offices from Hong Kong and are now based in Chiangmai, Thailand. Our decision to move offices was made last March and it took us a year to survey working arrangements in Chiangmai. With all that done, and a rather tough month of relocation work (hard, tiring, but now rewarding), we have a new address:

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Chiangmai does provide with a more direct context for our work. Civil society is far more alive and active and tourism-related groups especially in Northern Thailand have welcomed the presence of ECOT.

At a profound ceremony of dedication in the new offices, Dr. Prawate Khid-arn, General Secretary of CCA, who is also Chair of ECOT, spoke about the history of ECOT, its foundations in the early eighties in Bangkok, its travels around the world since then to the Caribbean, Hong Kong, and now back to Thailand. Dr. Prawate referred to the emerging and massive challenges that face communities and, indeed, entire countries which are being forced to open up their historic, cultural, and heritage spaces to curious visitors who often violate the dignity of the host communities. Whereas, he said, tourism should bring benefits to the local populations, things mostly work the other way. Host countries receive few, if any, benefits from tourism, he pointed out. He called on ECOT as a church based specialized agency to hasten and multiply its efforts to work with churches around the world, other faith-based communities, and other parts of civil society to make 'another tourism possible' – one in which justice is served, human dignity is affirmed, children and women are protected, and the environment is not abused.

Ranjan Solomon
10th February 2006

WTO AND ALL THAT

You had received from us in December a series of materials on the WTO-protests and the actions of the tourism network during those seven stormy days.

The working document “Sacrificing sustainability at the WTO altar: The case of tourism and the GATS” a paper developed by EQUATIONS, Bangalore, India was widely circulated and made its impact. A large number of media folk asked to speak with our group and were quite interested in understanding the concerns of the tourism issues. For certain, the tourism network has gained in profile since the WSF 2004. Our challenge now is to get the GTIF (Global Tourism Interventions Forum) active and viable in organizational and movement terms.

Another word about the document from EQUATIONS-- It is available from their offices and is a more-than-handy campaign and advocacy document for tourism activists in particular but for the broader trade justice movement in general. The reason why we need to really examine and use this document is because it provides the reasons why governments must necessarily assess the implications of the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services on sustainable tourism development. Ten years of solid research by EQUATIONS has qualified them as one of the best informed and researched groups in dealing with issues of trade justice in tourism.

Write to Vidya Rangan at the following address should you need a copy:

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The WTO is not behind us- just the Ministerial. It is a temptation to let issues be put in the back burner once the big events are over. The problem is that we cannot afford this lethargy simply because while we rivet our attention on the major events, powerful governments are quietly negotiating back room deals that leave the developing world, and its peoples, vulnerable. Advocacy and lobbying- important as they are during events like the WTO Ministerial- need to accompany a watchdog approach- relentless and tough. In short, we need to make the case of tourism and GATS known through a wider community of activists and groups seeking justice in global issues.

The Vitoria Statement in Support of the Struggles of Local Peoples Against Large-Scale Tree Plantations

The following Statement (co-signed/endorsed also by ECOT among a wide range of other organizations) was issued on 24/11/05 in Vitoria, Espirito Santo, Brazil at an international meeting on building support for local communities against large-scale tree plantations and GMO trees. This meeting was co-sponsored by World Rainforest Movement, FASE-ES and Global Justice Ecology Project. The city of Vitoria in Brazil, owes its name to the “victory” of the colonialist Portuguese against the original indigenous inhabitants of the land. Today, the same name has a totally different meaning. The indigenous Tupinikim and Guarani peoples have retaken the lands that were stolen from them by the giant pulp mill corporation Aracruz Cellulose. They have been joined in the struggle against the company and its plants by other local communities and organizations from civil society who, through uniting in the struggle, have weakened the company’s power. They have thus become a symbol of victory for peoples all over the world who are fighting against similar corporations.

Peoples throughout the world are also uniting at the local, national and international levels to put pressure on large scale tree plantations that have been depriving them of their livelihoods and destroying their lands. These struggles have brought us together in Vitoria, in Espirito Santo, Brazil to strengthen the local peoples’ movements against corporations that are advancing large scale monoculture tree plantations.

With that aim:

- We support the struggles of local peoples for land rights and access to land
- We support the struggles of local peoples who are defending their right to water, biodiversity, soils, foods, medicines, fuel, etc that come from the land.
- We support the struggles of local peoples for autonomy and self-determination.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against pulpwood plantations and pulp mills.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against oil palm plantations.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against carbon sink plantations.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against biomass plantations.
- We support the struggles of local peoples against the certification of large scale tree plantations.

We support the struggles of local peoples against genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and opposition to the introduction of GMO trees which would greatly exacerbate the impacts on local communities from large-scale tree plantations. We therefore call for a global ban on the release of GMO trees into the environment.

Large scale tree plantations, whether GMO or not, are the end result of a set of global economic mechanisms put into play by a series of international actors that make it possible for corporations to take over peoples' lands, water and biodiversity in order to increase profits. In addition to the pulp and paper corporations, the international entities working to disenfranchise local peoples in support of corporate profits and the neo-liberal model include International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and Asian Development Bank; organizations such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; commercial banks; and forestry consulting firms, all of whom act with the support of national governments.

We therefore demand that national governments end this destructive development model and act to support the rights and livelihoods of local peoples, rather than repressing them. We call on the people of the world to join the struggles of local peoples who are defending their rights, lands, water, and biodiversity.

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Other parts of the tourism network are encouraged to co-sign this statement. ECOT hopes to link with the WRM Movement in its work around the world but particularly in Latin



ECOT at the WCC assembly

A six-person team from ECOT will be present at the WCC Assembly to be held in Porte Alegre, Brazil from the 14th to 23rd, February, 2006. This includes one delegated representative to the assembly.

ECOT's participation will be through a 'mutirao offering' on the issue of 'Violence-in-tourism' and 'Overcoming violence through tourism'. Issues will focus on violence against ecology, women, children, and the abuse of trade-in-tourism to reinforce racist stereo-types. One of two case studies will centre attention on the post-tsunami reconstruction and the tsunami as a provoked disaster as well as being a nightmare for its victims even one year later! The second case study will be on justice tourism with a focus on how tourism can carry forward ideas of justice through tourism.

A 'Hearing on the Tsunami reconstruction processes will critically review how the tourism industry seems to have few lessons, if any, from the tsunami. An advocacy position on how adequate and bold grassroots activism among coastal communities and in the small islands can restore initiatives in the hands of the people will be shared and discussed.

An exhibition will also be held right through the days of the assembly at which the theme will be justice-in-tourism. Materials displayed will include posters, publications, DVDs, videos, and other useful handouts.

The ECOT Executive Committee plans to hold a session during the assembly so that a three-year strategic plan of action can be reviewed. Also on the cards, are partnership meetings with a wide range of delegations from churches around the world.

UNEP's Seventh Global Civil Society Forum (7th GCSF) in Dubai.

The 7th GCSF will take place at the Dubai International Conference and Exhibition Centre. ECOT has been invited in view of its new-found status as an accredited non-governmental organization at the UNEP Governing Council. GCSF participants also have the opportunity to attend the Ninth special session of UNEP Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) being held from 7th-9th February, as observers. This is only for representatives from accredited Non-Governmental organizations. Accreditation is given to those NGOs who have demonstrated an active commitment to environmental issues.

In October, 2005, ECOT was represented by Sabine Minninger at the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meetings for the 7th Global Civil Society Forum in Bangkok, Thailand. That meeting is one of six regional forums (Africa, Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, West Asia and the Asia Pacific) organized by UNEP to prepare for the 7th Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF).

Three key policy issues, namely, energy, chemical management, and tourism will be the considered during the next SS/GMEF. In this regard, GCSF is an important forum to provide the responses and views of the civil society to governments.

ECOT is represented at the Dubai meetings by Manik Wijeratne, an environmentalist in Sri Lanka who is active with GLIDE, which is a partner of ECOT in Sri Lanka.



CBD guidelines- a discussion paper

With support from Syed Liyakath, the GTIF has posted a discussion paper on CBD tourism guidelines. The paper has been circulated to as many international groups as possible so as to ensure a thorough discussion. We hope this will help mobilize advocacy at the international level. Do loop us in on the mailing lists so we could join in on the discussion.

A summary of the paper (attached) was also published on ECO - a civil society newsletter and circulated at the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)'s 11 meeting. The SBSTTA is a subsidiary body of the CBD. This meeting was held in Montreal, Canada between 28 Nov and 3 Dec 2005, which Syed Liyakath attended. The summary can be accessed at <http://www.elci.org/PDFS/CBD%20Eco%205.pdf>.

The paper is reproduced below for quick reference.

CBD – Biological Diversity and Tourism Guidelines
(UNEP/CBD/COP/7/21 pg 231)
- the controversy continues
A discussion paper by EQUATIONS, India

The International guidelines for activities related to sustainable tourism development in vulnerable terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems and habitats of major importance for biological diversity and protected areas, including fragile riparian and mountain ecosystems (tourism guidelines) in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted in the 7th Conference of Parties (Decision VII/4) in 2004, Kuala Lumpur

The process of introducing the guidelines, which began in 1997, and various debates around it have been captured by accounts of various interest groups. The charge throughout has been lack of concern about centrality of indigenous peoples rights and a tourism process that privileged and served interests of the corporate lobby. Numerous attempts to influence the guidelines in terms of process and content have not proved successful and at the COP-7 in Kuala Lumpur – 2004, a section of the NGOs issued a statement deploring and rejecting the process and the guidelines.

In this paper, we focus on the guidelines that were adopted and analyze them in terms of content. We have taken into consideration suggestions for incorporation that came from important civil society and indigenous peoples groups' consultations, which we find have almost no place or mention in the final guidelines. We hope this first critique will strengthen the campaign to demand for new guidelines that serves biodiversity conservation and valorize the rights and role of indigenous peoples and local communities in the context of sustainable development.

1. The tourism guidelines critique

The scope of the tourism guidelines states application of the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity whereas even the basic provisions (in tune with the CBD's objectives) have not been incorporated. The impacts of the tourism guidelines on various stakeholders has been determined based on a comparison of draft tourism guidelines that were issued after the Santo Domingo workshop in June 2001, recommendations that civil society groups made to the guidelines in the Delhi workshop, September 2001 and the guidelines adopted in COP-7, 2004. (*See annexure for detailed analysis*). The deletions and modifications to the draft guidelines have been done in an undemocratic manner and without any rationale given for them.

a. Impact on indigenous / local communities & institutions

The final guidelines have eliminated the role of the people in decision making on use of biodiversity resources and have limited the guidelines to their involvement only, without describing the level of involvement and left it ambiguous.

Indigenous peoples' organizations as a stakeholder have been omitted in the multi-stakeholder body. The multi-stakeholder body has been suggested by the tourism guidelines to be established to ensure dialogue, information sharing and conflict resolution among stakeholders in relation to tourism and biodiversity.

Capacity building of the people to participate in the decision making process, educate, build awareness, conduct monitoring, evaluation and research on tourism and its impacts do not

find space in the guidelines. The experiences of working at the grassroots level identifies that seeking the role of local / indigenous people in decision making processes not only works as a check and balance to ill-effects of unregulated tourism development but also harnesses the prospects of equitable, just and sustainable tourism development.

Indigenous & local communities' contribution to baseline information generation process has been excluded; their practices and livelihoods do not find any space in baseline. This is in conflict with Article 8(j)¹ of the CBD. Traditional knowledge as an important component of baseline information is left open and may lead to debates whether traditional knowledge is baseline information or not, especially from the mainstream society and sometimes from governments who insist on everything being "scientific". The recent controversy that the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), Government of India has gotten into over the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan may be quoted here as an example¹. The MoEF has placed an excuse to its implementation terming it as an unscientific process. On the one hand, the CBD perceives the role of indigenous and local communities as 'knowledge providers' and on the other, the tourism guidelines have circumvented this important consideration. This is in contradiction with objective #3 of the CBD where the emphasis is on fair and equitable benefit sharing; arising from indigenous / local knowledge and practices.

The guidelines' suggestion to harmonize national and regional development strategies, policies and plans for economic and social development and for land-use, as well as the baseline information and review may not always apply in territories of indigenous / local communities where traditional law and policy is practiced under the legal sanction of national governments. For e.g. Article 371(A) of the Constitution of India grants special legal status to Nagaland, a North-Eastern State in India that predominantly has indigenous population practising customary laws and practices. The guidelines fail to make this important consideration and assume, or take it for granted, that national processes would naturally extend to all areas

By omitting integration and interrelation tourism development with other alternative developments or activities in the same area, undue emphasis is being given to tourism development. One on hand, standardization may happen, which may not be in accordance to local requirements, and on the other local aspirations may be sidelined. But what is also dangerous is ushering in a tourism dependent economy.

The area where the guidelines fail miserably is by continuing to view people as threats to biodiversity. It suggests generating revenues from tourism and thereby reducing poverty and threats to biodiversity. The guidelines are based on an elitist approach where conservation is given precedence over peoples' issues. There is a stereotyped understanding that the people need to be "weaned off" their dependency on natural resources.

Box 1: The Andaman Trunk Road: Death and Disease to the Jarawa

The Andaman Trunk Road originates in Port Blair and cuts across the islands to reach Diglipur, 340 kms. to the North. It runs through 4 different islands. In two places, road transport has to be ferried across. Parts of the road run through some of the finest tropical rain forests. It has reached the Jarawa community, which is on the verge of extinction with an estimated population of about 260. The Jarawas have lived for thousands of years. When the road was started in the sixties, the Jarawa were not consulted. They opposed it by attacking the workers. In retaliation, the camps were protected with electric fencing, and many Jarawas were electrocuted.

As the road progressed:

- Forests became accessible
- Jarawa lands became settlements
- Agricultural fields and horticulture farms began to replace rain forest
- Contractors took out timber
- Contact with outsiders brought in disease. In 1999 a measles epidemic wiped out 60% of the population.
- A forest with low population density came into contact with people from high population density and became victims of disease and culture that they had no defence against.
- Other vices like alcohol, tobacco and sexual exploitation are the new addictions.
- A new form of tourism, Jarawa tourism has started in Port Blair; the Jarawa Roadshow gives tourists the opportunity to treat them as freaks.
- 100 big and small vehicles carrying 900 passengers cross the road everyday. 65% are tourists and administrators.¹

Intervention:

Two writ petitions, one in the Supreme Court and the other in the Kolkata High Court have recommended shutting down at least one third of the road that passes through Jarawa lands. The local administration has defied the Supreme Court order.

The road has meant money for the contractor, entertainment for the tourist, revenue for transporters and convenience for settlers. For the Jarawa it has spelt only trouble.

Consequences:

The awareness that the environment and ecology of the Andaman Islands is threatened by development has been repeatedly stressed by SANE, who provide studies and data on the nature of the interventions being made by the administration of the islands.

The ban on sawmills is now pushing the administration and contractors towards tourism development, in which the virgin forests, beaches and tribal communities are likely to be the victims.

Source: EQUATIONS, 2003. "Tourism in Protected Areas and Community Concerns" - paper presented at World Parks Congress.

The guidelines also assume that tourism brings development, which may not always be the case. EQUATIONS research in popular tourism destinations in India like Goa and Kovalam & Kumarakam in Kerala gives us evidence to the contrary. Tourism not only had devastating effect on the ecology of these geographical areas but also brought in social ills like drug addiction, prostitution, child sex tourism, trafficking of women and children, pedophilia etc. In relation to development of public infrastructure and facilities in the tourism development process attention is given to conveniences of tourists by compromising and even bypassing the basic needs of indigenous / local communities. This is not acceptable, as the benefits of development seem to be given in charity to communities, without considering their rights and dignity. The case of the Andaman Trunk Road may be quoted here to demonstrate the effect of the road passing through the heart of Jarawa homeland, an indigenous community who are on the verge of losing their identity and dignity because of this so called infrastructure development in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (see box #1).

EQUATIONS experience in India has shown that it is possible for tourism to be sustainable, both from ecological and economic perspectives, only when development reaches people first and then tourism is brought in. e.g. in Khonoma Village in Nagaland, the Ministry of Tourism has funded the first green village project in India where the needs of the people of the village have been addressed first and community managed ecotourism is expected to be developed later.

The guidelines fail to privilege customary and traditional stakeholders' opinion over other stakeholders in the tourism development process. The problem with this is that the guidelines fail to recognize that the indigenous / local peoples have a deeper understanding of their areas. Any other ("outsider's") opinion would be based on general understanding and may not be suited to local conditions. Similarly, the primacy of primary stakeholders (the indigenous / local communities) in management control and in arbitrations to ensure that their interests are not disregarded has been omitted.

b. Impact on ecosystems, biodiversity & conservation

Restriction of, prevention and management of tourism especially in fragile ecosystems has not been considered. This would mean lack of discretion in identifying areas for tourism development. The impacts of tourism, especially on access of local population to and availability of water, fuel, food and fodder, has been left out, which would delink tourism impacts on local resources and conflicts arising out of it.

Closure of ecologically sensitive areas, under or not under protected area status as an option that must be retained has not been included. Such areas need time to recuperate and rejuvenate from activities like tourism that have an impact on ecological processes. This reflects precedence given to tourism development and neglect to biodiversity concerns, which is against the objectives of the CBD viz. conservation of biological resources and sustainable use of its components

Box 2: EIA process in India

The Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification was issued under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, in January 1994. The notification made it mandatory for 29 industrial and developmental activities (increased to 32 by subsequent amendments) to get environmental clearance from the central government before establishing or starting operations.

The EIA process was introduced with the purpose of identifying / evaluating the potential beneficial and adverse impacts of developmental projects on the environment, taking into account environmental, social, cultural and aesthetic considerations. All of these considerations are critical to determine the viability of a project and to decide if a project should be granted environmental clearance. And if yes, on what conditions.

After eleven years of the notification, citizens' experiences of the EIA notification and decision-making process of development projects is filled with disappointment, anger and frustration. Throughout this period NGOs, citizens' groups and activists have raised concerns about the inherent flaws and discrepancies in the notification as well as the problems with its implementation. However, apart from a few positive amendments and some good initiatives, the actual potential of the notification is yet to be realised.

A draft Environmental Impact Assessment notification was issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India, on Sept 15th, 2005 in place of the earlier one state above. This notification seeks to change the requirements and stipulations regarding Environmental Clearance procedures for industrial or developmental projects. The text of the draft is available at <http://envfor.nic.in>.

The draft Notification threatens to fast-track the setting up of environmentally damaging projects by limiting public participation and increasing the discretionary powers vested with the Ministry and State Pollution Control Boards. The EIA Notification has been drafted in close consultation with industrial lobbies and trade associations and repeated complaints by citizens' groups have been set aside on the pretext that it impedes industrial development.

The Draft leaves the public with few tools or fora to influence industrial or development proposals impacting them. The draft notification proposes to weaken provisions guaranteeing access to information and public participation, relax clearance requirements on industries and activities with serious potential for environmental damage, and increases discretionary powers to the Ministry and State Pollution Control Boards without concomitant increase in their accountability.

Source: Kalpavriksh

c. Implications on tourism development processes

The guidelines have clearly diluted the impact assessment and management process. First of all, by limiting impact management processes to just inclusive monitoring and reporting system rather than periodic and detailed assessments; the guidelines are ambiguous as to what an inclusive system is, the guidelines give a free hand to tourism operations. The final guidelines have deleted a rather elaborate impact assessment process that was described in the draft. This may have serious implications on the way impact assessments are done for tourism projects. E.g. a mega tourism project was proposed in the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve in West Bengal by Sahara India, a leading business group, and the EIA report that they had prepared was fraught with discrepancies. However, on one hand, this was the basis for them to get clearance at the state level, but on the other, it became a bane as civil society groups campaigned to put a stop to the project.

In addition, the impact assessment is limited to minimum coverage of impacts to facilitate notification process and it may lead to impact assessment not being upto the mark or sometimes missing the rigor with which impact assessments need to be done. Here, the current EIA process in India can be quoted as a good example. There is a concerted effort to dilute the process and with such initiatives being already undertaken by national governments, the guidelines would further support and legitimize the process of dilution of the very basic principles of impact assessment and management processes (see box #2).

By removal of transparency and basic recognized standards, the guidelines have contributed to a lack of participation & democracy in the process of assessments. Moreover, transparent processes to identify impact management steps and resources have not been incorporated.

The guidelines, further, do not leave any scope for dialogue for revisions or changes to an approved project. This will leave the room open for such requirements to get unilaterally agreed upon. Apparently arbitrary deletion of clauses, especially on monitoring mechanisms, which were present in the draft but are nowhere to be seen in the final guidelines, will ensure no accountability of tourism development. The sub-clause providing approval of tourism projects without conditions have implications of certain 'influential' projects of business houses creeping in.

Instead of having quantitative and qualitative approaches that are linked to local knowledge systems of indigenous / local communities for impact assessments and management, standard methodologies - carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change have been suggested; their approaches need to be verified. This also conflicts with traditional methods of the people to understand change and devise appropriate response mechanisms based on traditional wisdom.

Moreover, if tourism standards are set at national level, local inputs may not find appropriate space in standards that have already been set. Hence developing such standards through consultations, dialogue and participatory methods would have been more appropriate in the guidelines.

d. Impact on governments

The guidelines have diluted the role of the governments as they have been absolved of ensuring protective measures. The role of local government units concerned with management of biological diversity and tourism has been omitted. This only means giving free reigns to the tourism industry. From the Indian perspective, local self governing institutions and traditional institutions have received constitutional sanction after the enactment of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment in 1993. The last 12 years of our experience working with these local governments reflect the fact that Central and state governments are hesitant in sharing the powers with local institutions. Omitting the roles of local governments in managing biodiversity will serve the corporate agenda of some of the state governments and will reverse the process of decentralization and participatory democracy in the long run.

e. Impact on industry

The industry has been given a holiday from accountability and responsibility under the guidelines. Instead, the guidelines state promotion of corporate policies by tourism industry on sustainable practices. The conflicts with policies of communities and civil society organizations have not been considered.

The guidelines do not state penalization of offenders. Only redress and compensation measures have been included in place of polluter pays principle without mention of penalization that may have to be imposed on violators.

The guidelines assume tourism actions are mitigating threats to biodiversity. This is against the fundamental understanding that any tourism activity will, on the contrary, have an impact on the biodiversity whatever be the nature of activity. It is yet to be proven that tourism activities have reduced intensity of impacts on biodiversity leave alone mitigate them. This is against the objectives of the CBD itself, which says sustainable use of natural resources on the presumption that any activity needs to be sustainable because it has an impact.

2. Our position and emerging advocacy agenda

The guidelines are not in consonance with the objectives of the CBD and in many places are in contradiction with it, e.g. with Article 8(j) on giving due recognition to the rights of indigenous & local communities.

Hence, the tourism guidelines are inadequate and inappropriate to be implemented in their current form. The crucial areas where the guidelines need to be worked on are as described in section 3 of this paper. The task at hand is to revisit the original philosophy of the CBD and to attempt to harmonize the tourism guidelines with the principles of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Agenda 21 and the UN's Draft Declarations on Right of Indigenous Peoples.

From the Indian context, the guidelines in this shape cannot be implemented unless critical concerns of communities are incorporated. The guidelines neglect peoples' participation and the rights of indigenous / local community institutions and hence we demand amendments to the current draft. The debate in India has moved to have a rights based approach in conservation of biodiversity. The tourism guidelines in the CBD do not match up to the current situation in India.

(Comments-critiques-suggestions on this paper may be sent to liyakhath@equitabletourism.org or ranjan@ecotonline.org)

¹ Article 8(j) of the Convention is concerned with the role of knowledge within *in situ* conservation and reads as follows:

“Each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate:

(j) Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices.”

¹ From January 2000, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) facilitated the NBSAP process, starting with the unusual step of giving its technical coordination to a NGO, Kalpavriksh, working in conjunction with a 15 member Technical and Policy Core Group. Administrative coordination was carried out by Biotech India Pvt. Ltd (BCIL), and funding was given by the Global Environment Facility through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In a significant departure from usual practice, the national report and recommendations were drafted only at the end of the planning process. Over **70 local, state, inter-state, and thematic action plans** were prepared by communities, academics, government officials, students, and others, through **widespread grassroots consultation** involving public hearings, biodiversity festivals, workshops and seminars, foot marches and boat rallies, questionnaires, and outreach through mass and folk media. **Well over 50,000 people participated in an influential way, making this the largest such exercise ever undertaken in India and perhaps the world.**

The final national report went through several rounds of public comment and peer review. Based on these, the final report was submitted to MoEF at the end of 2003. Till then, MoEF had indicated that this report would be the National Action Plan. Subsequently, however, and till now, MoEF has been dragging its feet in giving approval to this document or coming up with its own action plan.

Source: Kalpavriksh.

Acknowledgements

Layout: Roselle Figueiredo Solomon