the responsible tourism partnership

the responsible tourism partnership works in conjunction with other organisations to improve destinations for local people and their visitors

home   RT around the world   RT media   what is RT?   RT events   what we do   about us   marketing   library   contact us   links

the cape town declaration

The Cape Town Conference was organised by the Responsible Tourism Partnership and Western Cape Tourism as a side event preceding the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. The Cape Town Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations was attended by 280 delegates from 20 countries. The conference grew out of the South African work on responsible tourism guidelines and involved delegates field-testing the South African Guidelines on sites in and around Cape Town.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN DESTINATIONS

Shaping sustainable spaces into better places

We, representatives of inbound and outbound tour operators, emerging entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, national parks, provincial conservation authorities, all spheres of government, tourism professionals, tourism authorities, NGOs and hotel groups and other tourism stakeholders, from 20 countries in Africa, North and South America, Europe and Asia; having come together in Cape Town to consider the issue of Responsible Tourism in Destinations have agreed this declaration.

Mindful of the debates at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999, which asserted the importance of the economic, social and environment aspects of sustainable development and of the interests of indigenous peoples and local communities in particular.

Recognising the global challenge of reducing social and economic inequalities and reducing poverty, and the importance of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in the process.

Recognising the importance of the World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics, which aims to promote responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism and sharing its commitment to equitable, responsible and sustainable world tourism and its STEP initiative with UNCTAD, which seeks to harness sustainable tourism to help eliminate poverty.

Conscious that we are now ten years on from the Rio Earth Summit on Environment and Development, and that the World Summit on Sustainable Development taking place in Johannesburg will put renewed emphasis on sustainability, economic development, and in particular on poverty reduction.

Aware of the World Tourism Organization, World Travel and Tourism Council and the Earth Council's updated Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry and the success achieved by a number of businesses, local communities and national and local governments in moving towards sustainability in tourism.

Aware of the work of the UNEP, and the Tourism Industry Report 2002, and work of UNESCO, and other UN agencies, promoting sustainable tourism in partnership with the private sector, NGOs, civil society organisations and government.

Aware of the guidelines for sustainable tourism in vulnerable ecosystems being developed in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Conscious of developments in other industries and sectors, and in particular of the growing international demand for ethical business, and the adoption of clear Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies by companies, and the transparent reporting of achievements in meeting CSR objectives in company annual reports.

Recognising that there has been considerable progress in addressing the environmental impacts of tourism, although there is a long way to go to achieve sustainability; and that more limited progress has been made in harnessing tourism for local economic development, for the benefit of communities and indigenous peoples, and in managing the social impacts of tourism.

Endorsing the Global Code of Ethics and the importance of making all forms of tourism sustainable through all stakeholders taking responsibility for creating better forms of tourism and realising these aspirations.

Relishing the diversity of our world's cultures, habitats and species and the wealth of our cultural and natural heritage, as the very basis of tourism, we accept that responsible and sustainable tourism will be achieved in different ways in different places.

Accepting that, in the words of the Global Code of Ethics, an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism.

Recognising that dialogue, partnerships and multi-stakeholder processes - involving government, business and local communities - to make better places for hosts and guests can only be realised at the local level, and that all stakeholders have different, albeit interdependent, responsibilities; tourism can only be managed for sustainability at the destination level.

Conscious of the importance of good governance and political stability in providing the context for responsible tourism in destinations, and recognising that the devolution of decision making power to democratic local government is necessary to build stable partnerships at a local level, and to the empowerment of local communities.

Aware that the management of tourism requires the participation of a broad range of government agencies and particularly at the local destination level.

Recognising that in order to protect the cultural, social and environmental integrity of destinations limits to tourism development are sometimes necessary.

Having, during the Cape Town Conference, examined the South African Guidelines for Responsible Tourism, tested them in a series of field visits, and explored how tourism can be made to work better for local communities, tourists and businesses alike, we recognise their value in helping to shape sustainable tourism in South Africa.

Recognising that one of the strengths of the South African Guidelines for Responsible Tourism is that they were developed through a national consultative process, and that they reflect the priorities and aspirations of the South African people.

Recognising that Responsible Tourism takes many forms, that different destinations and stakeholders will have different priorities, and that local policies and guidelines will need to be developed through multi-stakeholder processes to develop responsible tourism in destinations.

Having the following characteristics, Responsible Tourism:

- minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people; and
- is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence

We call upon countries, multilateral agencies, destinations and enterprises to develop similar practical guidelines and to encourage planning authorities, tourism businesses, tourists and local communities - to take responsibility for achieving sustainable tourism, and to create better places for people to live in and for people to visit.

We urge multilateral agencies responsible for development strategies to include sustainable responsible tourism in their outcomes.

Determined to make tourism more sustainable, and accepting that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders in tourism to achieve more sustainable forms of tourism, we commit ourselves to pursue the principles of Responsible Tourism.

Convinced that it is primarily in the destinations, the places that tourists visit, where tourism enterprises conduct their business and where local communities and tourists and the tourism industry interact, that the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism need to be managed responsibly, to maximise positive impacts and minimise negative ones.

We undertake to work in concrete ways in destinations to achieve better forms of tourism and to work with other stakeholders in destinations. We commit to build the capacity of all stakeholders in order to ensure that they can secure an effective voice in decision making. We uphold the guiding principles for Responsible Tourism which were identified:

Guiding Principles for Economic Responsibility

Assess economic impacts before developing tourism and exercise preference for those forms of development that benefit local communities and minimise negative impacts on local livelihoods (for example through loss of access to resources), recognising that tourism may not always be the most appropriate form of local economic development

Maximise local economic benefits by increasing linkages and reducing leakages, by ensuring that communities are involved in, and benefit from, tourism. Wherever possible use tourism to assist in poverty reduction by adopting pro-poor strategies

Develop quality products that reflect, complement, and enhance the destination

Market tourism in ways which reflect the natural, cultural and social integrity of the destination, and which encourage appropriate forms of tourism

Adopt equitable business practises, pay and charge fair prices, and build partnerships in ways in which risk is minimised and shared, and recruit and employ staff recognising international labour standards

Provide appropriate and sufficient support to small, medium an   d micro enterprises to ensure tourism-related enterprises thrive and are sustainable

Guiding Principles for Social Responsibility

Actively involve the local community in planning and decision-making and provide capacity building to make this a reality

Assess social impacts throughout the life cycle of the operation – including the planning and design phases of projects - in order to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive ones

Endeavour to make tourism an inclusive social experience and to ensure that there is access for all, in particular vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and individuals

Combat the sexual exploitation of human beings, particularly the exploitation of children

Be sensitive to the host culture, maintaining and encouraging social and cultural diversity

Endeavour to ensure that tourism contributes to improvements in health and education

Guiding Principles for Environmental Responsibility

Assess environmental impacts throughout the life cycle of tourist establishments and operations – including the planning and design phase - and ensure that negative impacts are reduced to the minimum and maximising positive ones

Use resources sustainably, and reduce waste and over-consumption

Manage natural diversity sustainably, and where appropriate restore it; and consider the volume and type of tourism that the environment can support, and respect the integrity of vulnerable ecosystems and protected areas

Promote education and awareness for sustainable development – for all stakeholders

Raise the capacity of all stakeholders and ensure that best practice is followed, for this purpose consult with environmental and conservation experts

We recognise that this list is not exhaustive and that multi-stakeholder groups in diverse destinations should adapt these principles to reflect their own culture and environment.

Responsible tourism seeks to maximise positive impacts and to minimise negative ones. Compliance with all relevant international and national standards, laws and regulations is assumed. Responsibility, and the market advantage that can go with it, is about doing more than the minimum.

We recognise that the transparent and auditable reporting of progress towards achieving responsible tourism targets and benchmarking, is essential to the integrity and credibility of our work, to the ability of all stakeholders to assess progress, and to enable consumers to exercise effective choice.

We commit to making our contribution to move towards a more balanced relationship between hosts and guests in destinations, and to create better places for local communities and indigenous peoples; and recognising that this can only be achieved by government, local communities and business cooperating on practical initiatives in destinations.

We call upon tourism enterprises and trade associations in originating markets and in destinations to adopt a responsible approach, to commit to specific responsible practises, and to report progress in a transparent and auditable way, and where appropriate to use this for market advantage. Corporate businesses can assist by providing markets, capacity building, mentoring and micro-financing support for small, medium and micro enterprises.

In order to implement the guiding principles for economic, social and environmental responsibility, it is necessary to use a portfolio of tools, which will include regulations, incentives, and multi-stakeholder participatory strategies. Changes in the market encouraged by consumer campaigns and new marketing initiatives also contribute to market driven change.

Local authorities have a central role to play in achieving responsible tourism through commitment to supportive policy frameworks and adequate funding. We call upon local authorities and tourism administrations to develop - through multi-stakeholder processes - destination management strategies and responsible tourism guidelines to create better places for host communities and the tourists who visit. Local Agenda 21 programs, with their participatory and monitoring processes, are particularly useful.

We call upon the media to exercise responsibility in the way in which they portray tourism destinations, to avoid raising false expectations and to provide balanced and fair reporting.

We all have a responsibility to make a difference by the way we act.

We commit ourselves to work with others to take responsibility for achieving the economic, social and environmental components of responsible and sustainable tourism.

Cape Town, August 2002

Co-chairs Mike Fabricius Western Cape Tourism & Harold Goodwin International Centre for Responsible Tourism