



ORGANISATION MONDIALE DU TOURISME  
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION  
ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL DEL TURISMO  
ВСЕМИРНАЯ ТУРИСТСКАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ  
منظمة السياحة العالمية

**MINUTES OF THE FORTY-NINTH MEETING OF  
THE UNWTO REGIONAL COMMISSION  
FOR THE AMERICAS  
and  
CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
SEMINAR ON MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR  
TOURISM MSMEs IN THE AMERICAS**

**Mendoza, Argentina, 28-29 April 2009**

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
1. Minutes of the meeting of the Regional Commission .....	2
2. Conclusions of the Seminar .....	11
3. Annex 1: List of participants .....	23

## MINUTES OF THE FORTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE UNWTO REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS

### I

On 29 April 2009, the Regional Commission for the Americas held its forty-ninth meeting in the city of Mendoza, Argentina, under the Chairmanship of the Vice-Minister of Tourism of **Colombia**, Dr. Óscar Rueda. In attendance at the meeting were representatives of the following Member States of the Commission: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, and of 11 Affiliate Members (see detailed list of participants in Annex 1).

The meeting was begun with the approval of the following Agenda:

1. *Adoption of the agenda*
2. *Communication by the Chairman of the Commission (Colombia)*
3. *Preliminary remarks by the Secretary-General*
4. *Status of subjects dealt with at the forty-eighth meeting of the Commission*
5. *Impact of the world economic recession on tourism in general and in the Americas in particular*
  - (a) *Presentation of market trends in 2008 and outlook for 2009*
  - (b) *Report on the activities of the UNWTO Tourism Resilience Committee*
6. *Report on the execution and evaluation of the general programme of work for 2008-2009 and in the Americas region*
7. *Progress report on ST-EP projects and MDG Achievement Fund projects in the Americas region*
8. *Presentation of the draft general programme of work of the Organization for 2010-2011*
9. *Preparation of the eighteenth session of the General Assembly*
10. *Place and date of the fiftieth meeting of the Commission*

## II

***Communication by the Chairman of the Commission (Colombia)***

In his Communication as the Chairman of the Commission, the Vice-Minister of Tourism of **Colombia** thanked the authorities of Mendoza and of Argentina, on behalf of all the participants, for the warm welcome accorded by them to the delegations in attendance.

He discussed the current scenario for tourism, due to the economic crisis and the more recent situation presented by influenza A, and especially mentioned that there was a certain exaggeration and lack of prudence on the part of the media, which strongly affected tourism. It is important for the UNWTO, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to communicate with each other and for the UNWTO to request both the WHO and PAHO to act with the prudence and responsibility necessary in these cases.

In this regard, and at the initiative of the delegate of **Costa Rica**, the following decision was adopted by the participants of the meeting:

The Member States decide:

1. To express their support and solidarity with the families that have lost loved ones and with the countries affected by influenza A(H1N1);
2. To request the UNWTO General Secretariat to coordinate with the WHO and with the authorities of each country the actions that are being taken with respect to influenza A(H1N1), in order to avoid negative repercussions on tourism activity;
3. To call upon the States to take all the necessary precautions to mitigate the effects and the transmission of influenza A(H1N1);
4. To request the Secretary-General to keep the States informed of the development of the situation;
5. To ask the WHO and the National Governments that recommendations issued with regard to the prevention of influenza A(H1N1) not restrict travel abroad and that they be strictly commensurate to the seriousness of actual situations.

In relation with the forthcoming session of the Executive Council, which, among other questions, will deal with the candidatures for Secretary-General in order to choose a candidate to recommend to the General Assembly, the Chairman reported on the four candidatures, referring specifically to the candidates from Jordan and from Korea, who were present in the room.

As for the post of Deputy Secretary-General, there are provisions for the countries to be able to propose to the Secretary-General candidates for appointment as Deputy Secretary-General. At the proposal of the Chairman of the Commission, the following proposal was prepared and was adopted by the participants in the meeting:

The Commission decides:

1. Invoking the principle of representation and equitable geographical rotation, the Americas region considers that it should have the opportunity of occupying the post of Deputy Secretary-General of the UNWTO,
2. To present, unanimously and with the firm backing of all the countries, for the consideration of the Secretary-General-elect, two candidates from the Americas Region for the post of Deputy Secretary-General of the UNWTO: Mr. Márcio Favilla Lucca de Paula, of **Brazil** and Mr. José Rubén Rochi Parker, of **El Salvador**;
3. To request the support of the member countries of the UNWTO for the candidature of a representative of the Americas for the aforementioned post; and
4. To communicate these decisions to the UNWTO Executive Council at its session in Bamako, Mali, in May 2009.

Lastly, the Chairman gave the floor to the Secretary of Tourism of the **Argentine Republic**, Mr. Carlos Enrique Meyer, who expressed appreciation for the presence of the delegates of the Commission and said that he was proud to be able to host this meeting.

### III

#### *Preliminary remarks by the Secretary-General* (document CAM/49/3)

The preliminary remarks by the Secretary-General were presented by Mr. Taleb Rifai, in his capacity as Secretary-General ad interim.

He discussed the changes and challenges of the current situation, and referred to the climate of uncertainty deriving from the crisis, which could bring major transformations for the tourism industry. He raised concerns owing to the consequences of the crisis, but reaffirmed that three fundamental objectives should be maintained in the long term: job creation, poverty alleviation, and the fight against climate change.

As for the results of 2008, international arrivals grew by 2 per cent, which represents a slowdown relative to the trend registered over the past years. The Americas region, nevertheless, grew at a faster pace than the world average at 4 per cent, with even bigger increases in the subregions of Central and South America, with 7.9 per cent and 5.9 per cent respectively, although these figures are lower than those of the previous year. The only subregion of the world to experience a slightly higher growth rate relative to the previous year was the Caribbean.

Regarding the current situation of influenza A(H1N1), the Secretary-General a.i. informed that **Mexico** had a very good start of the year with good results in the first six months, which would obviously be affected by the current situation.

He also reported that the World Health Organization (WHO) is the organization designated by the United Nations to provide guidance and orientation regarding the situation and that, although the situation is serious, the necessary elements are in place in order to tackle it, since this is not the first crisis to be experienced by the sector.

The UNWTO has a representative in the Working Group of the United Nations in the WHO. During the meeting, a telephone connection was established with the UNWTO Headquarters in Madrid so that it could inform the Commission about the situation and the manner in which the UNWTO is working with the WHO to mitigate the effects on tourism as much as possible. The WHO is proceeding cautiously and has not recommended travel restrictions and, although it expects more cases to emerge, it does not consider that there is a need, for the time being, to think in terms of a pandemic. The UNWTO is urged to continue with this line of work in coordination with the WHO and to keep the Members informed in a timely manner regarding the development of the situation.

At the start of 2009, the UNWTO established the **Tourism Resilience Committee**, composed of representatives of the public sector and the private sector and other international organizations, to work on policies to support the sector and to propose to the governments measures that utilize tourism as a dynamizing element of the economy.

The Committee is open in nature and all the Members are invited to contribute to its work.

With the aim of monitoring trends more closely, two additional special issues of the UNWTO Barometer will be produced, in order to have more timely and up-to-date information. To this end, alliances have also been established with Amadeus, Visa, Microsoft and other partners, which will provide data on their respective areas of work and the latest demand-side trends, thus offering timely information.

The best practices and policies concerning responses to the crisis will be compiled in order to share this valuable information among all the Members of the UNWTO through a system based on the Internet. The tourism sector needs political support, not a financial bailout. There have been certain practices that have not contributed positively to the situation, such as the application by the United Kingdom of fees on travellers going abroad by air, which will hurt many destinations. It is considered that, during these times, policy decisions should facilitate travel and reduce regulations.

With respect to the situation of the Organization, the Secretary-General a.i. discussed the need for change and pointed out the challenges being tackled in terms of achieving greater involvement by the Members, providing more added value and improving the system of governance, using the report of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations, which provides a series of recommendations.

Regarding the appointment of the Deputy Secretary-General, he stated that the Secretary-General-elect should appoint the Deputy Secretary-General from among the different candidates proposed by each region and country and welcomed with interest those presented by the Americas region.

#### IV

#### *Status of the subjects dealt with at the forty-eighth meeting of the Commission*

The Regional Representative gave an oral presentation of the following points:

1. Tourism Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum (WEF). The WEF has been informed about the concern on the part of some countries regarding the methodology for the production of the indicators used. It was recalled that the UNWTO limits itself to providing statistical data, but does not have any influence in the preparation of the competitiveness indicators. The delegate of **Costa Rica** reiterated the concern regarding the sources used by the WEF to establish its competitiveness figures, indicating that the measurement by the WEF is economic and does not measure sustainability. The Director of Programme and Coordination of the UNWTO invited the Members to comment on cultural or sustainability measurement proposals, which the UNWTO would transmit to the WEF, along with their concerns and objective criticisms so that they can revise their criteria and better reflect the realities of the countries. Affiliate Member FEHGRA stated that all reports should contain an explanation of their methodology, and that if this is not the case, doubts or uncertainty regarding the data provided might be generated. The same concern should be raised by the reports of the WTTC that do not contain a methodology. The Secretary-General a.i. stated that this subject has been studied in detail at the UNWTO, taking into account that the WEF is an organization that looks to its own interest and has its own political agenda and commercial interests. Undoubtedly, these reports have their impact and therefore, the UNWTO should choose between involving itself more in order to wield influence or else to refrain from providing any data, and requests orientation from the Commission in this regard.
2. Travel warnings. The Committee on Facilitation has held two meetings and a draft set of recommendations has been produced for presentation to the Executive Council and the General Assembly. .
3. Moderniza Programme. Following the indications of the previous meeting, this has been extended to include **El Salvador**, and it is planned to do the same for **Guatemala** and **Nicaragua**.
4. Definitions of tourism. It is necessary to revise the categories concerning definitions of tourism in order to establish new indicators. At the meeting on statistics held in Bali this subject was addressed and progress has been made in this direction.

Lastly, the Chairman requested that, at UNWTO meetings, the inclusion of an agenda item for the follow-up of decisions adopted in the previous meeting be made a usual practice.

**V*****Impact of the economic recession on tourism  
in general and on the Americas in particular***

Regarding the impact of the world economic recession on tourism in general and on the Americas in particular, the UNWTO Regional Representative for the Americas gave two presentations:

1. Market trends in 2008 and outlook for 2009
2. Report on the activities of the Tourism Resilience Committee of the UNWTO (document CAM/49/5(b))

The presentations gave rise to various statements:

The delegation of **Brazil** stated that, as a response to the crisis, stimulus measures were increased to strengthen the domestic market and links with neighbouring countries were intensified in order to stimulate regional flows. The 2014 Football World Cup represents a great opportunity to continue investments in infrastructure, promotion, human resources training, etc.

The Minister from **Paraguay** pointed out that, as there was so much difference among the countries of the region, it would be preferable to disaggregate the regional data presented. She suggested investing in statistics in order to have more disaggregated and more fine-tuned data. As for travel facilitation, it could be recommended to airlines not to apply fees to the tourist, since at times the governments are unable to control their actions. The airlines change routes or rates without coordinating with the public sector. Attention should be called when airlines introduce abrupt measures. It would also be advisable to strengthen border facilitation in the Southern Cone.

The Minister from **El Salvador** shared the experience of Central America, through SICA (Central American Integration System), indicating that currently tourists can travel freely among Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

**VI*****Report on the execution and evaluation of the general programme of work  
for 2008-2009 and in the Americas region***  
(documents CAM/49/6 and CAM/49/6/Add.)

The Director of Programme and Coordination of the UNWTO gave a presentation on the execution of the general programme of work for 2008-2009 and in the Americas region.

The Secretary-General a.i. stated that there had been some adjustments made to the 2009 budget, and 10 per cent of the budget of each Section had been frozen as a contingency fund in the face of uncertainty.

The delegate of **Costa Rica** inquired about the budget of the Americas, with regard to the level of expenditure or commitment incurred, to which both the Director of Programme and the Regional Representative responded that in the Americas 100 per cent of its budget had been spent or committed.

## VII

### *Progress report on ST-EP projects and MDG Achievement Fund projects in the Americas region*

The UNWTO's Latin American Coordinator for ST-EP projects and Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) projects gave a presentation on the activities being carried out in the region.

She reported that, currently, there are 28 ST-EP projects in: **Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua** and **Peru**, and five MDG-F projects in **Ecuador** (2), **Honduras** and **Nicaragua** (2) and two MDG-F project concept papers approved for **Panama** and **Peru**.

The Secretary-General a.i. pointed out that these projects have constituted an important activity that the UNWTO has been able to capitalize on. Concretely, the MDG-Fs entail the coordinated work of various agencies of the United Nations system and it is important for governments to be alert with the resident agencies of the United Nations in order to identify opportunities for various projects that could be related to tourism. For example, in Nicaragua, the UNWTO is the coordinating agency of one of the MDG-F projects.

## VIII

### *Presentation of the general programme of work of the Organization for 2010-2011*

(document CAM/49/8)

The Director of Programme and Coordination of the UNWTO presented this document, which was well received by the Members of the Commission.

**IX*****Preparation of the eighteenth session of the General Assembly***  
(Document CAM/49/9)

The Secretary-General a.i. presented the document specifying the preparatory and related meetings, as well as the structure of the General Assembly and other useful information for the participants.

**X*****Place and date of the fiftieth meeting of the Commission***

The Secretariat informed that it will take place in the city of Astana, Kazakhstan, on the afternoon of 2 October 2009, in the context of the eighteenth session of the General Assembly (2-9 October).

\* \* \*

When the time came for the delegations to depart, the Chairman of the CAM, on behalf of all the delegates, once again thanked the authorities of the beautiful city of **Mendoza** and of the **Argentine Republic** for their hospitality and for the impeccable organization. The Secretary-General a.i. expressed the same sentiment and announced that Mr. Alejandro Varela of **Argentina** would shortly be assuming the post of Deputy Regional Representative for the Americas.



**CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON  
MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR TOURISM MSMEs**

Mendoza, Argentina, 28 April 2009

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The *International Seminar on Management Support for Tourism Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs)* took place on Tuesday, 28 April 2009, in the context of the forty-ninth meeting of the UNWTO Regional Commission for the Americas.

In a tourism market that is increasingly competitive at the international level, demanding travellers are seeking products, services and destinations that are capable of satisfying their needs, based on quality and differentiation.

The entrepreneurial fabric of the region is composed mainly of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. In the face of current worldwide economic and financial situation, this seminar aimed to broaden knowledge regarding the design and application of different programmes and strategies geared towards supporting the competitiveness of MSMEs.

To this end, it offered a variety of instruments for overcoming the current challenges, based on greater exchange of experiences and information, facilitating tourism management that is sustainable in economic, socio-cultural and environmental terms.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR**

The objectives of the seminar were:

- a) To analyse the important role played by MSMEs in the tourism development of the region,
- b) To identify the challenges and the difficulties that need to be faced in the international and regional tourism context,
- c) To exchange experiences and to present support programmes geared towards favouring the efficient business management of MSMEs,
- d) To provide knowledge about management tools and systems that make it possible to achieve a competitive advantage in the market and to overcome the obstacles faced,
- e) To explore the current situation and to offer orientations regarding the most effective way of overcoming the difficulties presented by the financial crisis.

The structure of the seminar encouraged interaction among the speakers and the participants, with five panel debates and a final presentation. The panel debates consisted of an introductory presentation aimed at positioning the subject, with a group of expert panellists who debated with the moderator and with the audience on the different aspects addressed.

The Annex to this document contains a schematic diagram providing an overall view of the seminar in terms of the various subjects analysed.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS OF THE PANELS

#### **PANEL DEBATE 1: Public-private cooperation in the promotional strategy of destinations. The effectiveness of tourism fairs.**

The introductory presentation was given by Mr. *Jörn Gieschen, Director, Destination Strategy & Marketing, THR, Spain.*

As a result of the analysis by the experts and the exchange of opinions with the participants, the following aspects were highlighted:

- There exist various factors that are changing the tourism market, among which it is worth highlighting: Internet use, the search for new experiences, the emergence of new operators, and greater importance of price.
- The keys of the new marketing are based on knowledge of emotional and psychological factors of consumers, as well as the feelings and experiences that they wish to have in the destination. Therefore, governments and enterprises should design and promote their offerings based on these particular characteristics of the customer.
- The complexity of the tourism sector and the changes in the demand mentioned above make it necessary to revise traditional strategies of tourism promotion. The current crisis can also represent an inflection point that prompts a rethinking of participation in fairs. Mainly, such participation is motivated by the interest in promoting destinations, creating an image and to establish contacts with the various actors of the activity. However, in the large fairs there is enormous competition among the exhibitors, and therefore, the impact on the final travel decision can turn out to be very low.
- Given that at these events there are usually time constraints for setting up meetings among professionals, it is recommended to meet personally with the operators at their own offices in order to receive the necessary attention to the product that is being offered.
- In response to the questioning of the effectiveness of large fairs, some alternatives have been identified to facilitate more efficient outreach to the target audience:
  - Participation in specialized fairs (agrotourism, cultural tourism, domestic tourism, etc.) and the formation of joint working groups between the public and private sectors, where the professional can act in a more direct manner through a plan of work established beforehand.
  - The creation of a destination's own fair in the generating markets.

- The creation of an own sales team in collaboration with travel agents of generating markets who best know the clientele and who are up to date with their needs and consumption profiles. The professionalization of sales representatives can be developed through specific workshops and seminars.
- Although there have been advances in the capacity-building of MSMEs and of tourism chambers of commerce according to their specific training needs, efforts should continue to improve the professionalization of the sector and to raise the quality of tourism service.
- It is recognized that the tourism business model should be based on dialogue and on permanent public-private partnership, designing joint strategies to develop experiences and emotions that are focused on creating value for the customer.
- Public-private cooperation should originate from a clear policy and business decision that leads to shared strategic actions and investments. This cooperation makes it possible to maximize benefits and minimize risks, and constitutes an indispensable element for marketing, the definition of products and management destination.
- Strengthening business associations and the creation of instruments that ensure the active and constant participation of the private sector in decision-making is essential.

Lastly, among the examples of cooperation that currently exist in the region and mentioned during this panel discussion are:

- The process of tourism integration in Central America, where political will has been the key for the definition and adoption of the regional tourism promotion policy in Europe, which was forged by consensus among the Ministries of Tourism and the private sector grouped together in the Federation of Tourism Chambers of Commerce of Central America. This strategy has included the launch of the brand "*Centroamérica, tan pequeña, tan grande*" as a regional corporate identity, and the creation of the Central American Tourism Promotion Agency (CATA) based in Madrid. In this entire process, the articulation between the public and private sectors has been crucial in order to achieve greater involvement by the parties concerned and to obtain positive results in terms of tourists, support programmes and institutional reinforcement. The promotion of multi-destination and multi-product offerings at the regional level has benefited the positioning and publicity of Central America as a destination in the European market, augmenting opportunities for business and tourism development.
- In Brazil, public-private cooperation made it possible to develop a National Tourism Plan, in which 65 priority destinations are defined, as well as to create the National Tourism Council, which constitutes a democratic body that fosters dialogue in order to carry out joint actions.

- In Panama, joint collaboration has contributed to the creation of the Tourism Master Plan, which made it possible to define the tourism model and vocation for each of the 26 destinations identified. In this process, the involvement of the host communities and partnership with the private sector and with local enterprises were essential for strengthening the value chain.
- In Argentina, public-private cooperation is reflected in the creation of the National Tourism Promotion Institute, composed of the Ministry of Tourism, provincial entities and the private sector. The Argentine Chamber of Tourism actively participates in the coordination of the presence of a growing number of interested enterprises.

## **PANEL DEBATE 2: How to improve efficiency levels through technology? The new e-marketing.**

The introductory presentations were carried out by:

- *Mr. Eulogio Bordas, President, THR, Spain.*
- *Mr. Felipe González Abad, Senior Adviser, Amadeus, Spain.*

As a result of the debate among the speakers and participants, it is important to put forward the following considerations:

- Technology applied to tourism constitutes a fundamental tool to make the business more efficient, from the point of view of management and control, and more effective from the perspective of marketing and distribution.
- Through the use of new technologies it is possible:
  - Gain access to new markets and potential clients
  - Reduce operating and management costs
  - Diversify offerings
  - Satisfy the expectations of the demand by offering personalized services
  - Augment the commercialization of products at affordable prices.
- The complexity of tourism offerings the emergence of new electronic intermediaries and the diverse alternatives clients have to choose from represent some of the difficulties faced by enterprises that wish to stand out on the Web.
- As of late, the traditional information sources that generate credibility have declined in importance. Consumers and potential clients no longer turn to the media as much, but rather seek information and share their experiences via the Internet.
- It is recommended that MSMEs develop customer relations through direct-marketing strategies that reflect their needs, emotions, and expectations, offering special advantages in the use of websites.

- MSMEs can even apply strategies geared towards constituting strong websites of a certain sector, for example, hotels, which would make it possible to centralize purchases electronically. This would facilitate the governmental homologation of sites that sell quality offerings in order to minimize bad practices that hurt the image of the industry, although the regulation of websites could turn out to be not very feasible due to its enormous complexity.
- In the region there is a large diversity of tourism MSMEs and each one of them has its own needs, tools and resources. Therefore, the type of technology that should be implemented depends on the business model and on particular characteristics such as location, size, marketing variables (price, product, markets, etc.).
- The development of technological programmes and specific tools for MSMEs should be carried out in a simple and accessible manner. This would contribute, among other factors, to better use of databases to efficiently link updated information between the supply side and customers.
- Taking into account that the majority of the businesses associated with the Chambers of Tourism are MSMEs, it is considered very important to implement training programmes on the efficient use of technologies in order to improve business competitiveness and profitability.
- To give an example, the Federation of Chambers of Tourism of Ecuador is coordinating a project in the countries of the Andean area to support hotel MSMEs in training actions, booking management, and good practices.
- The Internet, as a communication tool and as a new intermediary in the value chain, can represent a threat in certain cases. In order to avoid such a situation, MSMEs should reinvent their offerings and redefine their tourism business models through the Internet.
- As for the new opportunities that could crop up in the future, it is expected that, through Web 3.0 and "dynamic packaging", it will be possible to electronically create specific tourism packages according to the needs of the client, through information systems interconnected with the great diversity of tourism offerings.

### **PANEL DEBATE 3: Excellence/quality as a competitive tool to improve profitability.**

The introductory presentation was given by *Mr. Rubén Carbajal, Director of Tourism Modernization, Ministry of Tourism, Mexico.*

It is worth highlighting the following aspects that emerged from the contributions of the panellists and the participation of the audience:

- The search for excellence as a competitive advantage is based on the profound changes that have occurred in the tourism market. On the one hand, increasingly well-informed and demanding consumers seek products that meet or even exceed their expectations. On the other hand, the growth in tourism offerings has pushed businesses to differentiate themselves and to position themselves in a different way vis-à-vis the competition.
- As for the general characteristics of MSMEs, they are considered to have greater capacity to adapt and survive than large enterprises. Furthermore, they have lower investment requirements and closer relationships with their clients.
- It was recognized that the lack of competitiveness of MSMEs could be due to their informality and low level of institutionality, as well as to the lack of efficient systems for organization and management. Moreover, they face high borrowing costs and have insufficient collateral to arrange credit.
- For the above reasons, management and quality systems are indispensable in order to achieve excellence as a competitive tool and to improve profitability.
- Programmes to support the competitiveness of MSMEs should be systematic and rigorous, but at the same time, simple and adaptable to the specific reality of each one of them. In this way, they represent an opportunity to increase customer satisfaction, through professionalization and modernization, and adopting practical tools to improve control of the business.
- The application of these programmes generate concrete and tangible added value for the enterprises. This differentiation can be strengthened through the development of accreditation systems or labels for different business models (hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, etc.).
- It is important to mention that excellence programmes contribute to the formalization of the business of MSMEs through an improvement in their organization and structure. This, in turn, provides them with better access to credit and different opportunities for financing.
- In this regard, there is a need for the creation of new financial products and lines of credit specifically for MSMEs that stimulate micro-entrepreneurship and small tourism projects.

- It is important to raise the awareness of the members of the private sector regarding the advantages of adopting and including these programmes in order to increase the competitiveness and ensure the sustainability of their businesses.
- It is understood that quality constitutes a path that includes, among other matters, the implementation of tools to achieve excellence and the appropriate management of suppliers and human resources. In turn, excellence implies a state through which the business develops, principally, preventive methodologies in order to head off problems that may crop up.
- The Moderniza Programme of Mexico constitutes an example in the Americas of how a management system can enable tourism enterprises to increase their levels of profitability and competitiveness. This Programme has also been applied successfully in El Salvador, and its implementation is envisioned in other countries of Central America.
- The Argentine Chamber of Tourism together with the country's Ministry of Tourism have also developed support programmes for the competitiveness of MSMEs, including training for the personnel of each enterprise in order to lend continuity to their production processes.
- The Brazilian Support Service for Micro and Small Enterprises (SEBRAE) has a special service for designing preventive plans in times of crisis and to help MSMEs through the implementation of quality and training programmes.
- In relation with the establishment of a system for measuring the excellence of destinations, it is important to consider the particular characteristics of each country and even of each region or locality.
- It should be clarified that the World Centre of Excellence for Destinations (CED) does not constitute a certification system, but rather analyses destinations in order to subsequently offer them tools and provide recommendations for improving quality.
- Lastly, it should be pointed out that the general strengthening of MSMEs raises the quality of the tourism destination as a whole.

#### **PANEL DEBATE 4: Strategic alliances and joint ventures: Is it possible to survive without a brand?**

The introductory presentation was carried out by *Mr. Eulogio Bordas, President, THR, Spain.*

Taking into account the subject of this panel debate, the Dakar Rally was presented by *Mr. Luis Böhm, Secretary of Tourism of Mendoza, Argentina.*

The analysis and the discussion of the content dealt with during this panel debate resulted in the following considerations:

- Strategic alliances and joint ventures represent a solution for becoming more competitive in the tourism market, as they contribute to:
  - Offering more value to the market and to the partners
  - Generating and sharing knowledge
  - Pooling efforts through coordinated actions geared towards a common objective
  - Taking advantage of the synergies deriving from the experience of each of the participating enterprises
- Today, the world has gone from being an information society to being a *dream society*, where emotional management with a strong symbolic component acquires great importance, by offering attractive experiences and narratives to clients.
- It is recognized that the majority of alliances end up failing. This failure can be caused by multiple reasons, principally, because the partners are not willing to share knowledge or competitive activities.
- Before establishing alliances, it is recommended to evaluate the conditions required by the association and to analyse what is expected from the brand to which the MSME plans to associate itself. It is also advisable to define which of the parties involved will be responsible for designating the management team.
- Possession of a brand provides recognition in a market based on a series of attributes that are valued by consumers and that have an influence on their final purchase decision.
- In order to survive without a recognized brand and obtain the trust and respect of clients, it is indispensable to apply strategies of differentiation and/or specialization.
- Some trends are geared towards *co-branding*, which means the marketing of certain destinations and activities associated with various exclusive and unique distinctions, such as, for example, the most prestigious archaeological sites of the world, the best islands of the world, etc.

- The holding of the Dakar Rally in Argentina and Chile represents a successful example of a strategic alliance with an internationally famous brand. For the organization and management of this major event, public-private partnership was key and contributed to strengthening the image of both the product and the destinations, generating economic and social benefits for MSMEs.

**PANEL DEBATE 5: How to encourage the creation of tourism MSMEs? Legislative, tax and credit challenges.**

The introductory presentation was carried out by *Mr. Hermes Navarro del Valle, Office Chief, Costa Rica Tourism Board.*

It should be clarified that the scheduled presentation was to be by the Inter-American Development Bank on "Opportunities of MIF Financing for SMEs", but it was not possible to present it due to unforeseen reasons beyond the control of the speaker. In any case, the presentation is available for reference.

Below is a summary of the principal themes that were discussed in this panel debate:

- Based on the results of a survey carried out in the region, the majority of the countries stated that they do not have specific policies for tourism MSMEs, but rather, these are included under more general policies at the national level. In this regard, it should be understood that MSMEs have their own needs and require specific types of assistance.
- At the time of their creation, MSMEs face a series of obstacles that need to be identified:
  - Informality and insufficient entrepreneurial and financial culture
  - Lack of tax incentives and specific legal frameworks
  - Difficulty in obtaining access to financing, whether due to lack of credit or because of the requirements in order to qualify for a loan
  - Excessive bureaucracy for the constitution of companies.
- In order to address the numerous credit-related challenges, the application of a system of specific incentives could contribute to investment and development of MSMEs through various means:
  - Creation of financial incentives
  - Reduction of taxes (value-added tax, income tax, corporation tax, etc.)
  - Launching tax moratoriums and fiscal stimulus packages
  - Discounts on interest rates.

- In connection with the foregoing, and in order to favour the viability and sustainability of existing enterprises, it would be interesting to grant tax benefits to those enterprises that reinvest in their activities.
- The regime of tax incentives proposed by Hotel and Restaurant Business Federation of the Argentine Republic (FEHGRA) is based on the principle of ensuring that tax burdens do not constitute a loss in overall revenue.
- In the case of Jamaica, MSMEs constitute the basis of local development, and actions are geared towards ensuring their protection and the continuity of processes, regardless of whether the incentives may change or disappear.
- In Paraguay, various entrepreneurs have constituted the Cooperative Network of Tourism Ventures (COTUR) based on the identification of a series of problems they shared and their common reality. This alliance has enabled them to become more competitive through the training of their partners, the development of quality standards and the joint sale of products.
- The qualitative criteria for classifying MSMEs can vary depending on the country or region. Some of these objective classification criteria refer to the number of employees, turnover or invested capital.
- In general terms, in order to stimulate business activity it is considered very important to implement professional training actions in order to increase competitiveness and to strengthen the extensive value chain of the tourism sector.
- It is also worth highlighting the importance of the productive role of MSMEs in the Americas as leading players in tourism development and as sources of employment, dignity and income at the local and international levels. All of this contributes to the appropriate insertion of tourism activity in the socio-economic fabric of the communities where they operate, taking into consideration the different dimensions of sustainability (environmental, economic and socio-cultural).
- It is recommended to conduct more in-depth studies and research on MSMEs of the region in order to expand the existing basic information and make it possible to formulate specific strategies that stimulate their creation and development.

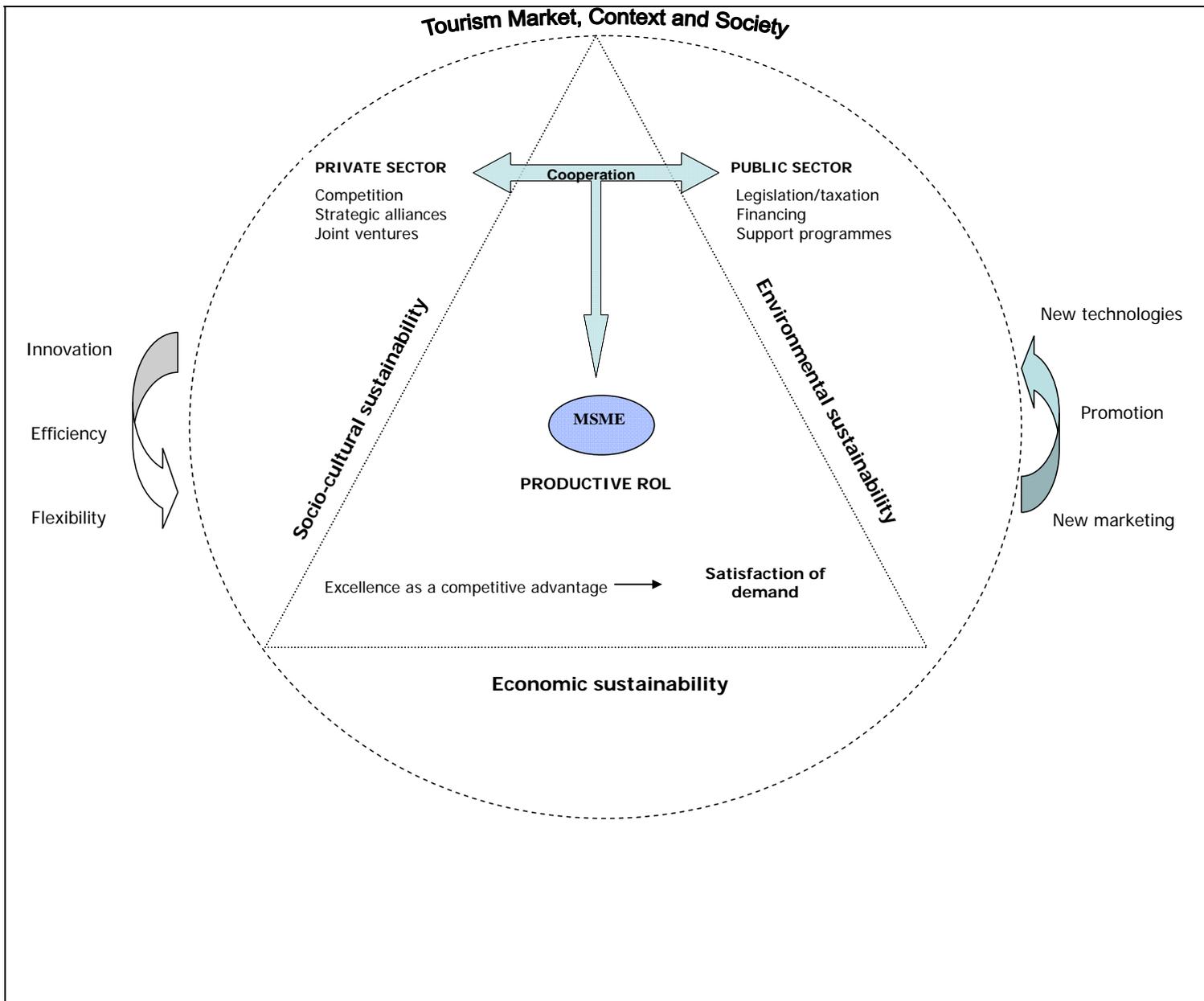
**FINAL PRESENTATION: The impact of the economic crisis. How can MSMEs overcome it?**

The introductory presentation was carried out by *Mr. Eulogio Bordas, President, THR, Spain.*

It is interesting to highlight some of the important issues mentioned during this presentation:

- Tourism is hurting from the deterioration of the world economy. Therefore, it is recognized that the current situation does not constitute a crisis specific to tourism, but rather of other economic sectors that have consequences on tourism.
- The existing uncertainty also impacts the entrepreneurial fabric of the region, mostly composed of MSMEs, affecting tourism consumption and the viability of businesses. The crisis is generating numerous difficulties and complications, such as lack of liquidity, worker layoffs and even company bankruptcies.
- Nevertheless, it is recognized that travel intention has not been reduced, but rather certain parameters of demand behaviour have been modified, such as length of stay or tourism expenditure at the destination.
- In order for MSMEs to be able to deal with the crisis as best as possible, and continue supporting employment and the economies of the communities where they carry out their businesses, efforts should be geared towards both studying and understanding the causes as well as more in-depth market research. This will contribute to the acquisition of accurate and up-to-date information that will provide greater knowledge of reality. In this way, it will be possible to carry out an approximate diagnostic assessment of the situation and adopt prudent and realistic strategies and measures.
- In all other previous crises, tourism has demonstrated a notable capacity to recover and has always come out of them strengthened and in good shape. History shows that the crises can also offer opportunities because they require substantial efforts and solidarity on the part of the sector.
- For this reason, the current situation can represent an opportunity to reassess the business model or to implement innovation and flexibility strategies through concrete actions, such as the adaptation of the supply to changes in the demand, the creation of specific alliances, the possibility of offering segmented products on the Web and the promotion of tourism activity in the country itself.

## Annex 1: Schematic overview of the Seminar



Source: Own elaboration

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