



# Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

For Responsible Tourism

and related documents



# World Tourism Organization

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## GLOBAL CODE OF ETHICS FOR TOURISM

adopted by resolution A/RES/406(XIII) at the thirteenth WTO General Assembly (Santiago, Chile, 27 September - 1 October 1999).

### Preamble

**We, Members of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), representatives of the world tourism industry, delegates of States, territories, enterprises, institutions and bodies that are gathered for the General Assembly at Santiago, Chile on this first day of October 1999,**

**Reasserting** the aims set out in Article 3 of the Statutes of the World Tourism Organization, and aware of the “decisive and central” role of this Organization, as recognized by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in promoting and developing tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,

**Firmly believing** that, through the direct, spontaneous and non-mediatised contacts it engenders between men and women of different cultures and lifestyles, tourism represents a vital force for peace and a factor of friendship and understanding among the peoples of the world,

**In keeping** with the rationale of reconciling environmental protection, economic development and the fight against poverty in a sustainable manner, as formulated by the United Nations in 1992 at the “Earth Summit” of Rio de Janeiro and expressed in Agenda 21, adopted on that occasion,

**Taking into account** the swift and continued growth, both past and foreseeable, of the tourism activity, whether for leisure, business, culture, religious or health purposes, and its powerful effects, both positive and negative, on the environment, the economy and the society of both generating and receiving countries, on local communities and indigenous peoples, as well as on international relations and trade,

**Aiming** to promote responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism in the framework of the right of all persons to use their free time for leisure pursuits or travel with respect for the choices of society of all peoples,

**But convinced** that the world tourism industry as a whole has much to gain by operating in an environment that favours the market economy, private enterprise and free trade and that serves to optimize its beneficial effects on the creation of wealth and employment,

**Also firmly convinced** that, provided a number of principles and a certain number of rules are observed, responsible and sustainable tourism is by no means incompatible with the growing liberalization of the conditions governing trade in services and under whose aegis the enterprises of this sector operate and that it is possible to reconcile in this sector economy and ecology, environment and development, openness to international trade and protection of social and cultural identities,

**Considering** that, with such an approach, all the stakeholders in tourism development – national, regional and local administrations, enterprises, business associations, workers in the sector, non-governmental organizations and bodies of all kinds belonging to the tourism industry, as well as host communities, the media and

the tourists themselves, have different albeit interdependent responsibilities in the individual and societal development of tourism and that the formulation of their individual rights and duties will contribute to meeting this aim,

**Committed**, in keeping with the aims pursued by the World Tourism Organization itself since adopting resolution 364(XII) at its General Assembly of 1997 (Istanbul), to promote a genuine partnership between the public and private stakeholders in tourism development, and wishing to see a partnership and cooperation of the same kind extend, in an open and balanced way, to the relations between generating and receiving countries and their respective tourism industries,

**Following up on** the Manila Declarations of 1980 on World Tourism and of 1997 on the Social Impact of Tourism, as well as on the Tourism Bill of Rights and the Tourist Code adopted at Sofia in 1985 under the aegis of WTO,

**But believing** that these instruments should be complemented by a set of interdependent principles for their interpretation and application on which the stakeholders in tourism development should model their conduct at the dawn of the twenty-first century,

**Using**, for the purposes of this instrument, the definitions and classifications applicable to travel, and especially the concepts of "visitor", "tourist" and "tourism", as adopted by the Ottawa International Conference, held from 24 to 28 June 1991 and approved, in 1993, by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its twenty-seventh session,

**Referring** in particular to the following instruments:

- ◆ Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948;
- ◆ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 16 December 1966;
- ◆ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 16 December 1966;
- ◆ Warsaw Convention on Air Transport of 12 October 1929;
- ◆ Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation of 7 December 1944, and the Tokyo, The Hague and Montreal Conventions in relation thereto;
- ◆ Convention on Customs Facilities for Tourism of 4 July 1954 and related Protocol;
- ◆ Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 23 November 1972;
- ◆ Manila Declaration on World Tourism of 10 October 1980;
- ◆ Resolution of the Sixth General Assembly of WTO (Sofia) adopting the Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code of 26 September 1985;
- ◆ Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989;
- ◆ Resolution of the Ninth General Assembly of WTO (Buenos Aires) concerning in particular travel facilitation and the safety and security of tourists of 4 October 1991;

- ◆ Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development of 13 June 1992;
- ◆ General Agreement on Trade in Services of 15 April 1994;
- ◆ Convention on Biodiversity of 6 January 1995;
- ◆ Resolution of the Eleventh General Assembly of WTO (Cairo) on the prevention of organized sex tourism of 22 October 1995;
- ◆ Stockholm Declaration of 28 August 1996 against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children;
- ◆ Manila Declaration on the Social Impact of Tourism of 22 May 1997;
- ◆ Conventions and recommendations adopted by the International Labour Organization in the area of collective conventions, prohibition of forced labour and child labour, defence of the rights of indigenous peoples, and equal treatment and non-discrimination in the work place;

**affirm the right to tourism and the freedom of tourist movements,**

**state our wish to promote an equitable, responsible and sustainable world tourism order, whose benefits will be shared by all sectors of society in the context of an open and liberalized international economy, and**

**solemnly adopt to these ends the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.**

*Article 1***Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies**

1. The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with 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; stakeholders in tourism development and tourists themselves should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples and to recognize their worth;
2. Tourism activities should be conducted in harmony with the attributes and traditions of the host regions and countries and in respect for their laws, practices and customs;
3. The host communities, on the one hand, and local professionals, on the other, should acquaint themselves with and respect the tourists who visit them and find out about their lifestyles, tastes and expectations; the education and training imparted to professionals contribute to a hospitable welcome;
4. It is the task of the public authorities to provide protection for tourists and visitors and their belongings; they must pay particular attention to the safety of foreign tourists owing to the particular vulnerability they may have; they should facilitate the introduction of specific means of information, prevention, security, insurance and assistance consistent with their needs; any attacks, assaults, kidnappings or threats against tourists or

workers in the tourism industry, as well as the wilful destruction of tourism facilities or of elements of cultural or natural heritage should be severely condemned and punished in accordance with their respective national laws;

5. When travelling, tourists and visitors should not commit any criminal act or any act considered criminal by the laws of the country visited and abstain from any conduct felt to be offensive or injurious by the local populations, or likely to damage the local environment; they should refrain from all trafficking in illicit drugs, arms, antiques, protected species and products and substances that are dangerous or prohibited by national regulations;

6. Tourists and visitors have the responsibility to acquaint themselves, even before their departure, with the characteristics of the countries they are preparing to visit; they must be aware of the health and security risks inherent in any travel outside their usual environment and behave in such a way as to minimize those risks;

*Article 2***Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment**

1. Tourism, the activity most frequently associated with rest and relaxation, sport and access to culture and nature, should be planned and practised as a privileged means of individual and collective fulfilment; when practised with a sufficiently open mind, it is an irreplaceable factor of self-education, mutual tolerance and for learning about the legitimate differences between peoples and cultures and their diversity;
2. Tourism activities should respect the equality of men and women; they should promote human rights and, more particularly, the individual rights of the most vulnerable groups, notably children, the elderly, the handicapped, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples;
3. The exploitation of human beings in any form, particularly sexual, especially when applied to children, conflicts with the fundamental aims of tourism and is the negation of tourism; as such, in accordance with international law, it should be energetically combatted with the cooperation of all the States concerned and penalized without concession by the national legislation of both the countries visited and the countries of the perpetrators of these acts, even when they are carried out abroad;
4. Travel for purposes of religion, health, education and cultural or linguistic exchanges are particularly beneficial forms of tourism, which deserve encouragement;
5. The introduction into curricula of education about the value of tourist exchanges, their economic, social and cultural benefits, and also their risks, should be encouraged;

### Article 3



## **Tourism, a factor of sustainable development**

1. All the stakeholders in tourism development should safeguard the natural environment with a view to achieving sound, continuous and sustainable economic growth geared to satisfying equitably the needs and aspirations of present and future generations;
2. All forms of tourism development that are conducive to saving rare and precious resources, in particular water and energy, as well as avoiding so far as possible waste production, should be given priority and encouraged by national, regional and local public authorities;
3. The staggering in time and space of tourist and visitor flows, particularly those resulting from paid leave and school holidays, and a more even distribution of holidays should be sought so as to reduce the pressure of tourism activity on the environment and enhance its beneficial impact on the tourism industry and the local economy;
4. Tourism infrastructure should be designed and tourism activities programmed in such a way as to protect the natural heritage composed of ecosystems and biodiversity and to preserve endangered species of wildlife; the stakeholders in tourism development, and especially professionals, should agree to the imposition of limitations or constraints on their activities when these are exercised in particularly sensitive areas: desert, polar or high mountain regions, coastal areas, tropical forests or wetlands, propitious to the creation of nature reserves or protected areas;

5. Nature tourism and ecotourism are recognized as being particularly conducive to enriching and enhancing the standing of tourism, provided they respect the natural heritage and local populations and are in keeping with the carrying capacity of the sites;

## Article 4



### **Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and a contributor to its enhancement**

1. Tourism resources belong to the common heritage of mankind; the communities in whose territories they are situated have particular rights and obligations to them;
2. Tourism policies and activities should be conducted with respect for the artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage, which they should protect and pass on to future generations; particular care should be devoted to preserving and upgrading monuments, shrines and museums as well as archaeological and historic sites which must be widely open to tourist visits; encouragement should be given to public access to privately-owned cultural property and monuments, with respect for the rights of their owners, as well as to religious buildings, without prejudice to normal needs of worship;
3. Financial resources derived from visits to cultural sites and monuments should, at least in part, be used for the upkeep, safeguard, development and embellishment of this heritage;
4. Tourism activity should be planned in such a way as to allow traditional cultural products, crafts and folklore to survive and flourish, rather than causing them to degenerate and become standardized;

## Article 5



### **Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities**

1. Local populations should be associated with tourism activities and share equitably in the economic, social and cultural benefits they generate, and particularly in the creation of direct and indirect jobs resulting from them;
2. Tourism policies should be applied in such a way as to help to raise the standard of living of the populations of the regions visited and meet their needs; the planning and architectural approach to and operation of tourism resorts and accommodation should aim to integrate them, to the extent possible, in the local economic and social fabric; where skills are equal, priority should be given to local manpower;
3. Special attention should be paid to the specific problems of coastal areas and island territories and to vulnerable rural or mountain regions, for which tourism often represents a rare opportunity for development in the face of the decline of traditional economic activities;
4. Tourism professionals, particularly investors, governed by the regulations laid down by the public authorities, should carry out studies of the impact of their development projects on the environment and natural surroundings; they should also deliver, with the greatest transparency and objectivity, information on their future programmes and their foreseeable repercussions and foster dialogue on their contents with the populations concerned;

*Article 6***Obligations of stakeholders in tourism development**

1. Tourism professionals have an obligation to provide tourists with objective and honest information on their places of destination and on the conditions of travel, hospitality and stays; they should ensure that the contractual clauses proposed to their customers are readily understandable as to the nature, price and quality of the services they commit themselves to providing and the financial compensation payable by them in the event of a unilateral breach of contract on their part;
2. Tourism professionals, insofar as it depends on them, should show concern, in cooperation with the public authorities, for the security and safety, accident prevention, health protection and food safety of those who seek their services; likewise, they should ensure the existence of suitable systems of insurance and assistance; they should accept the reporting obligations prescribed by national regulations and pay fair compensation in the event of failure to observe their contractual obligations;
3. Tourism professionals, so far as this depends on them, should contribute to the cultural and spiritual fulfilment of tourists and allow them, during their travels, to practise their religions;
4. The public authorities of the generating States and the host countries, in cooperation with the professionals concerned and their associations, should ensure that the necessary mechanisms are in place for the repatriation of tourists in the event of the bankruptcy of the enterprise that organized their travel;

5. Governments have the right – and the duty - especially in a crisis, to inform their nationals of the difficult circumstances, or even the dangers they may encounter during their travels abroad; it is their responsibility however to issue such information without prejudicing in an unjustified or exaggerated manner the tourism industry of the host countries and the interests of their own operators; the contents of travel advisories should therefore be discussed beforehand with the authorities of the host countries and the professionals concerned; recommendations formulated should be strictly proportionate to the gravity of the situations encountered and confined to the geographical areas where the insecurity has arisen; such advisories should be qualified or cancelled as soon as a return to normality permits;

6. The press, and particularly the specialized travel press and the other media, including modern means of electronic communication, should issue honest and balanced information on events and situations that could influence the flow of tourists; they should also provide accurate and reliable information to the consumers of tourism services; the new communication and electronic commerce technologies should also be developed and used for this purpose; as is the case for the media, they should not in any way promote sex tourism;

*Article 7***Right to tourism**

1. The prospect of direct and personal access to the discovery and enjoyment of the planet's resources constitutes a right equally open to all the world's inhabitants; the increasingly extensive participation in national and international tourism should be regarded as one of the best possible expressions of the sustained growth of free time, and obstacles should not be placed in its way;
2. The universal right to tourism must be regarded as the corollary of the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, guaranteed by Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 7.d of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
3. Social tourism, and in particular associative tourism, which facilitates widespread access to leisure, travel and holidays, should be developed with the support of the public authorities;
4. Family, youth, student and senior tourism and tourism for people with disabilities, should be encouraged and facilitated;

## Article 8



### **Liberty of tourist movements**

1. Tourists and visitors should benefit, in compliance with international law and national legislation, from the liberty to move within their countries and from one State to another, in accordance with Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; they should have access to places of transit and stay and to tourism and cultural sites without being subject to excessive formalities or discrimination;
2. Tourists and visitors should have access to all available forms of communication, internal or external; they should benefit from prompt and easy access to local administrative, legal and health services; they should be free to contact the consular representatives of their countries of origin in compliance with the diplomatic conventions in force;
3. Tourists and visitors should benefit from the same rights as the citizens of the country visited concerning the confidentiality of the personal data and information concerning them, especially when these are stored electronically;
4. Administrative procedures relating to border crossings whether they fall within the competence of States or result from international agreements, such as visas or health and customs formalities, should be adapted, so far as possible, so as to facilitate to the maximum freedom of travel and widespread access to international tourism; agreements between groups of countries to harmonize and simplify these procedures should be encouraged; specific taxes and levies penalizing the tourism industry and undermining its competitiveness should be gradually phased out or corrected;

5. So far as the economic situation of the countries from which they come permits, travellers should have access to allowances of convertible currencies needed for their travels;

## Article 9



### **Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry**

1. The fundamental rights of salaried and self-employed workers in the tourism industry and related activities, should be guaranteed under the supervision of the national and local administrations, both of their States of origin and of the host countries with particular care, given the specific constraints linked in particular to the seasonality of their activity, the global dimension of their industry and the flexibility often required of them by the nature of their work;

2. Salaried and self-employed workers in the tourism industry and related activities have the right and the duty to acquire appropriate initial and continuous training; they should be given adequate social protection; job insecurity should be limited so far as possible; and a specific status, with particular regard to their social welfare, should be offered to seasonal workers in the sector;

3. Any natural or legal person, provided he, she or it has the necessary abilities and skills, should be entitled to develop a professional activity in the field of tourism under existing national laws; entrepreneurs and investors - especially in the area of small and medium-sized enterprises - should be entitled to free access to the tourism sector with a minimum of legal or administrative restrictions;

4. Exchanges of experience offered to executives and workers, whether salaried or not, from different countries, contributes to foster the development of the world tourism industry; these movements should be facilitated so far as possible in compliance with the applicable national laws and international conventions;

5. As an irreplaceable factor of solidarity in the development and dynamic growth of international exchanges, multinational enterprises of the tourism industry should not exploit the dominant positions they sometimes occupy; they should avoid becoming the vehicles of cultural and social models artificially imposed on the host communities; in exchange for their freedom to invest and trade which should be fully recognized, they should involve themselves in local development, avoiding, by the excessive repatriation of their profits or their induced imports, a reduction of their contribution to the economies in which they are established;

6. Partnership and the establishment of balanced relations between enterprises of generating and receiving countries contribute to the sustainable development of tourism and an equitable distribution of the benefits of its growth;

*Article 10***Implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**

1. The public and private stakeholders in tourism development should cooperate in the implementation of these principles and monitor their effective application;
2. The stakeholders in tourism development should recognize the role of international institutions, among which the World Tourism Organization ranks first, and non-governmental organizations with competence in the field of tourism promotion and development, the protection of human rights, the environment or health, with due respect for the general principles of international law;
3. The same stakeholders should demonstrate their intention to refer any disputes concerning the application or interpretation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism for conciliation to an impartial third body known as the World Committee on Tourism Ethics.

## Procedures for consultation and conciliation for the settlement of disputes concerning the application of the Code of Ethics for Tourism

Adopted by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics in October 2004 [WCTE/DEC/4(II)] and endorsed by UNWTO General Assembly resolution A/RES/506(XVI) of December 2005.

1. In the event of a dispute concerning the interpretation or application of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, two or more stakeholders in tourism development<sup>1</sup> may jointly submit the matter of such a dispute (hereinafter “the matter”) to the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (“the Committee”) as the body of the World Tourism Organization competent to settle such questions.
2. The Chairman of the Committee shall acknowledge receipt of the matter in a written communication to the parties and

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of the Code, the term “stakeholders in tourism development” includes: national governments; local governments with specific competence in tourism matters; tourism establishments and tourism enterprises, including their associations; institutions engaged in financing tourism projects; tourism employees, tourism professionals and tourism consultants; trade unions of tourism employees; travelers, including business travelers, and visitors to tourism destinations, sites and attractions; local populations and host communities at tourism destinations through their representatives; other juridical and natural persons having stakes in tourism development including non-governmental organizations specializing in tourism and directly involved in tourism projects and the supply of tourism services.

request the Secretary-General to conduct consultations with the parties in order to prepare a report to the Committee, which shall be submitted within a period of thirty days, containing all the relevant facts, a summary of the positions taken by the parties and the Secretary-General's suggestions concerning the recommendations that the Committee may wish to approve for the resolution of the various issues involved. If in the process of such consultations, the Secretary-General and the parties have reached understandings as to the measures to be taken in order to settle the matter, the contents of such understandings shall be set out in the report of the Secretary-General for the consideration of the Committee. Upon a request by the Secretary-General, the Committee may extend the period for the submission of the report.

3. The Committee shall examine the report of the Secretary-General at a session following its submission and shall consider and approve recommendations to the parties regarding the settlement of the matter. To that end, the Committee may decide to set up a panel of three members who shall prepare draft recommendations for the approval of the Committee. As a general rule, the panel shall prepare the draft recommendations within the same session of the Committee at which the report of the Secretary-General has been submitted, but if the nature of the matter, and other relevant circumstances and reasons, justify a lengthier discussion of the issues involved, the Committee may authorize the panel to submit the draft recommendations at a subsequent session.

4. A panel set up by the Committee, in preparing draft recommendations, may decide to hold consultations with the parties. Such consultations may also be held by the Committee or the panel at the request of any of the parties at any time during the consideration of the matter. The Committee and a panel set up by the Committee may agree by consensus to adopt specific modalities for the consideration of a matter. Subject to the provisions in paragraph 5 below, the proceedings of the Committee and of a panel set up for the consideration of a matter shall be conducted in strict confidence.

5. In approving its recommendations to the parties the Committee shall decide upon the period within which the recommendations should be implemented by the parties. The Secretary-General shall report thereon to the Committee. Such a report shall be considered by the Committee, which shall issue a press release on the substance of the settlement if its recommendations have been implemented. If one or more of its recommendations have not been implemented, the Committee shall decide on the action to be taken in the light thereof, including the holding of renewed consultations with the parties and the issuance of a press release containing the conclusions reached by the Committee.

6. The Committee may also consider questions submitted by individual stakeholders or Member States concerning specific aspects of the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. If it deems it appropriate, the Committee may issue clarifications or advisory opinions for future guidance.

7. The Committee shall report to the General Assembly on all the matters of implementation and interpretation submitted to it.
8. The expenses incurred in the process of consultations, and any other expenses concerning the work of the Committee and the Secretariat in the consideration of a matter, shall be borne by the Parties unless the circumstances are considered exceptional by the Committee.
9. These procedures shall be reviewed by the Committee three years after their approval by the General Assembly in the light of the experience gained in their practical application. In that context, the Committee shall examine all the relevant modalities used and required. Having completed the review of the procedures, the Committee shall decide if, and in what terms, the application of the procedures shall be delegated to the regional commissions, bearing in mind the need to ensure consistency and coherence in the application and interpretation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

## Guidelines for the consideration of disputes

Adopted by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics in May 2005 [WCTE/DEC/3(III)] and endorsed by UNWTO General Assembly resolution A/RES/506(XVI) of December 2005.

1. The World Committee on Tourism Ethics was established by the General Assembly of WTO with the mandate to promote the acceptance and implementation of the Code by the different stakeholders in tourism development.
2. Paragraph 1 of the Procedures for consultation and conciliation for the settlement of disputes stipulates that in the event of a dispute, two or more stakeholders may jointly submit their dispute to the Committee.
3. Disputes not jointly submitted by all the Parties involved shall not be considered by the Committee. However, matters concerning the general application of ethical principles in tourism may be submitted unilaterally to the Committee and may include references to specific disputes insofar as they illustrate the principles in question, and provided that the submitter of the matter is not involved in the disputes cited.
4. The Committee may provide, on its own initiative, a clarification regarding ethical principles included in the Code.

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