

In the last decade we have witnessed the tremendous growth of international tourism. Tourism is one of the main sources of income and foreign exchange around the world. Just in 2013, tourism accounted for 9% of global GDP, created 1 out of every 11 jobs and generated more than 6% of total exports, i.e., 1.4 trillion dollars.

However, **the challenge we face is to ensure that these results will translate into benefits for the people who are engaged in this activity.** This means ensuring that tourism's potential and growth are fully harnessed in order to achieve fair and sustainable development that is also environmentally and culturally responsible.

In Mexico, we are aware of tourism's potential **to contribute to the development of a region, a locality or a city.** Therefore, it is necessary to reaffirm our commitment to become the leading country in the implementation of actions aimed at community development through tourism activity.

Tourism in our country is enjoying a period of peak performance. This is demonstrated by our growth trend, which is above the international average.

For Mexico, it is a great privilege to form part of international efforts to **promote tourism as a transformative tool** and to share our experiences.

This year, the celebration of World Tourism Day explores the links between tourism and community development.

Community development entails the effective participation of individuals in decision-making processes as a fundamental step towards generating more efficient mechanisms.

Tourism is the ideal vehicle for achieving true community development because, in addition to being a growth industry, it integrates the traditions and unique characteristics of a place into a value chain that generates significant economic development.

Tourism makes it possible to build a social fabric of solidarity, as it creates support networks and strengthens the sense of belonging. In addition, it fosters the preservation of the historical and cultural roots of the nation by valorizing its heritage.

Tourism is also a means for reducing poverty. It results in the productive empowerment of communities by making them part of the tourism value chain. In other words, it generates jobs, business opportunities, higher income and more investment.

In Mexico, tourism employs more than 3 million people; it is the top source of employment for young people between 16 and 24 years and is the sector with the second highest participation rate among women. This activity has allowed tourism-oriented communities to consolidate themselves as hubs of development.

Our country has pioneered the inclusion of communities as part of decision-making processes.

That is why, in Mexico, we are aware of the importance of participation in the tourism sector. This is borne out by the actions taken by the Government of the Republic aimed at strengthening the role of communities in national tourism growth.

Constituting a clear example are the cooperation agreements between the Ministry of Tourism and the National Commission

for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, through which more than 171 million pesos have been allocated to support tourism projects in indigenous communities.

The **Programme for Economic Empowerment of Women** in the Tourism Sector contributes to the creation of micro, small and medium-sized tourism enterprises run by women, to promote their integration in economic activity and greater gender equality.

Finally, **one of the most significant successful cases that Mexico has implemented in order to achieve community development through tourism is the Magical Towns brand.**

A Magical Town is a place that possesses unique symbolic attributes, an authentic history, significant events, or even an everyday quality. All of this represents **a great opportunity for the life and soul of a community to attract tourism.**

This branding takes advantage of these features and promotes the sustainable development of localities.

To date, the Magical Towns initiative has resulted in **a direct impact on 3.7 million tourists, generating 6 billion pesos in economic revenues, benefiting 2 million Mexican families.**

However, after 4 years of operation **its rapid growth demanded a review that would identify advances and areas of opportunity.** After a diagnostic analysis of each of the 83 Magical Towns, today we propose a new approach **that allows its consolidation as a veritable instrument tool for community development:**

First, strengthening social participation.

Second, a Transversal Agenda for inter-institutional and intergovernmental coordination.

Third, valorization of territories.

Fourth, competitiveness and productive inclusion.

Fifth, environmental sustainability.

Sixth, mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and accountability.

In short, there is a shift from a programme with low participation of the community base, **to one where it is recognized, encouraged and empowered**; from a programme with scattered and unlinked actions, **to one with a transversal inter-institutional and intergovernmental agenda**; from a programme with little recognition of the different dimensions that enrich and provide an overall significance to the territory, **to a programme that highlights the role of such dimensions**; from a programme consisting almost exclusively of investment in infrastructure, **to another that promotes the different dimensions that generate competitiveness with an emphasis of capabilities and productive inclusion**; from participation that has traditionally been alien to the dimension of environmental sustainability, **to recognition of its priority status** and; from a programme with weak mechanisms that lacked clear definition **to a new approach that incentivizes the fulfilment of goals and accountability.**

CONCLUSION

These actions demonstrate the commitment of the President of the Republic to all Mexicans and lay the foundations for the achievement of the goals outlined in the National Development

Plan to consolidate an inclusive and prosperous Mexico through tourism.

The economic contribution of tourism has increased its political importance, and an increasing number of countries are giving greater weight to **tourism in the planning of their development policies.**

Nevertheless, **true tourism success should be based on the effective participation of communities in development processes at the local, regional and national levels.**

To achieve this we must **pursue the consolidation of mechanisms for the participation and effective collaboration of the different sectors—public, private and civil society—that ensure community development.**

Thank you very much.