



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

CE/84/7(a)
Madrid, September 2008
Original: English

Eighty-fourth session
Madrid, Spain, 14 and 15 October 2008
Provisional agenda item 7(a)

REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Note by the Secretary-General

This document contains the report of the thirty-fifth meeting of the Programme Committee held at Headquarters on 2 and 3 September 2008.

REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

1. The Programme Committee (PC) held its thirty-fifth meeting at the Organization's Headquarters on 2 and 3 September 2008. The meeting was chaired by Datuk Dr. Victor Wee, the PC Chairman. A list of participants is attached as Annex 1 to this report.

A. Introductory remarks

2. The Chairman was pleased to see the good level of participation and that all regions were represented. He stressed the importance of this meeting in the preparation of the next programme of work, but also in readjusting the current programme, taking into account global challenges and the present economic crisis.

3. The Committee elected Mr. Stanislav Novakov, from Bulgaria, as its Vice-Chairman.

4. The Secretary-General welcomed the members of the Committee and reiterated the importance of their deliberations regarding the current and forthcoming programmes of work. He briefly referred to the healthy performance of world tourism in the first half of 2008, as well as to the main activities of the Organization this year

5. The Secretary General referred also to the need to follow carefully the current developments in the world economy; he presented a summary of a UNWTO-commissioned report, analysing the international economic situation and its likely impacts on the tourism sector, and made some suggestions for urgent actions in the UNWTO agenda.

6. The Programme Committee held discussions about it, and it considered appropriate to undertake some new, immediate activities – i.e. activities not originally included in the programme of work for 2008-2009 – so as to assist Members of the Organization to better assess those impacts and especially to take the appropriate measures in the tourism sector. The Committee also recognized the need of undertaking periodic reviews of the world economic issues and their implications on travel and tourism, as and when required.

7. Basically, the activities recommended refer to snapshot impact analysis of the global economic situation on the following:

- a) major tourist-generating markets and in main types of destinations, with particular emphasis on long-haul destinations;
- b) transportation patterns and transport companies (mainly air and land), including low-cost carriers, and differentiating between long and short haul;
- c) potential gainers and losers at regional and sub-regional levels, identifying in each case the main factors that governments and the private sector will need to take into account to respond to the current crises.

8. The Committee recommended that the Secretary-General conduct these studies as soon as possible in order to present their results and practical recommendations during the World Travel Market (London) in November 2008. In addition, it required the Secretary General to present these and eventually other follow-up proposals to the Executive Council, based on the debates of the Programme Committee and the evolution of the economic situation, and subsequently introduce the necessary budgetary adjustments in the programme of work for 2008-2009 to undertake them.

B. Implementation and evaluation of the General Programme of Work for the period 2008-2009

9. After examining the documents PC/35/5 and PC/35/5 Add.1, the Committee took note with satisfaction of the large number of activities undertaken by the Secretariat during the first semester 2008 and appreciated the progress accomplished and the results achieved so far.

10. The Committee noted the frequent participation of UNWTO officials to non-UNWTO events, organised either by governments of Member States, or by other UN agencies or by other parties. Such presence served to highlight the importance of tourism in wider fora, or to reinforce the role of the Organization and get support to its activities, or also to sustain political efforts of Ministries of Tourism or NTAs in their national context. However, it is a time consuming activity, with an important induced cost (working hours of UNWTO staff) and, in some cases, a direct cost (air tickets, accommodation, etc.) to the Organization. The Committee recommended, therefore, to attempt to reduce the participation in external events whenever possible, but it also acknowledged that this is a complex issue in which political considerations have often priority over technical aspects. Guidelines should be prepared in order to help the Secretary General to take the right decision in each case.

11. Regarding the evaluation of events, the Committee congratulated the Secretariat for the harmonised information compiled on this issue, making it possible, for the first time, to identify global strengths and weaknesses in this major activity of the Organization. It appeared to the Committee that the good results obtained through this evaluation process could still be improved in order to achieve higher levels of excellence. Therefore, the Committee recommended to draft general guidelines on the organization, structure and objectives of technical events; these guidelines should be specifically addressed to: (a) organizers (i.e. senior responsible officials at UNWTO and corresponding national counterparts in host countries), (b) speakers, and (c) moderators of UNWTO technical events.

12. Members of the Committee also appreciated the positive results obtained in the evaluation of technical missions; it also noted that improvements could be made to reach not only a higher level of excellence in the results of these missions, but also a higher commitment of Members in the evaluation process of them. For example, a practice should be implemented in order to ensure that the terms of reference for each mission are formally agreed between the requesting government and the UNWTO Secretariat, in advance of the mission, and that such terms are clearly communicated to the consultant who will conduct it.

13. The Committee encouraged the Secretariat to pursue its efforts in evaluating all UNWTO activities, including also research studies, publications and technical cooperation projects, and linking, in the future, this evaluation process to the performance of UNWTO staff in charge of the corresponding activities.

C. Preparation of the General Programme of Work 2010-2011

14. The recommendations expressed by the Members of the Committee concerning the preparation of the next programme of work appear in document CE/84/7(c).

D. Coordination between the Programme and the Budget and Finance Committees

15. After examining the documents PC/35/8, the Programme Committee, which includes the Chairman of the Committee of Budget and Finance, agreed that the preparation of the budget of the Organization for each biennium should, at least partially, be based on the Programme of Work agreed for the same period in order to reflect, also in budgetary terms, the priorities of Member States.

16. Therefore, and in order to facilitate, first the preparation and then the implementation of the programme of work, the Committee agreed to gradually move towards an integrated work with the CBF, at least as far as the budget is concerned. Thus, the Committee decided to join its efforts with the CBF and to jointly hold their next meeting in early 2009 (corresponding to the 36th PC meeting). The coordinated action of both Committees would also facilitate the adoption of results-based management and budgetary systems (RBM and RBB), in line with the practices recommended by the United Nations.

E. Place and date of the Programme Committee's thirty-sixth meeting

17. The Committee decided to hold its next meeting in Madrid on 24 and 25 February 2009. Taking into account the previous item regarding the coordination between the Programme and the Budget and Finance Committees, the CBF meeting could take place on 25 and 26 February 2009, also in Madrid.

18. The Chairman called the meeting to a close and thanked all Members of the Committee for their active participation, as well as the Secretariat for the preparatory work and the logistical support provided.