



Report of the 32nd meeting of the World Tourism Network on Child Protection

ITB Berlin, Germany, 9 March 2017

The UNWTO Children's Network held its 32nd meeting in Berlin on 9 March 2017. This gathering highlighted the most successful initiatives championed by national tourism administrations and their partners from the tourism industry and non-governmental sector. The event also served as a platform to establish linkages with the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 by illustrating good practices that lower the extent of vulnerability of children and youth in tourism.

Introductory remarks

Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General, UNWTO, pointed out that the extraordinary growth of the tourism sector in recent years is also bringing along a number of serious challenges. He stressed the importance of getting tourism professionals from both the public and private sector to work together to prevent, combat and eradicate child exploitation, and praised the Network's meetings for working towards that objective. The Secretary-General highlighted the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development as a key juncture for the fight against child exploitation, since it is bringing the global tourism family to work ever more closely in the name of a more responsible sector.

Carol Bellamy, Chair of the World Tourism Network on Child Protection, welcomed the speakers and expressed her delight in seeing the Ministers of Tourism of Ghana and Sudan, as well as the government officials from other Africa countries, Asia and the Pacific and the Americas in the audience. The Chair recalled that the Network's meeting is a multi-stakeholder gathering which, involving governments, private sector and civil society, serves as a platform for sharing best practices and research on child protection in tourism.

Special session: Child protection championed by the governments and their industry partners

Africa

Mr. Tokiaritefy Rabeson, General Director of Tourism Development of the Ministry of Tourism of Madagascar, reported on relevant actions to combat sexual exploitation of children in Madagascar, particularly the building of a coalition of stakeholders under the aegis of the Ministry of Tourism. This coalition involves the National Monitoring Committee and a group of local monitoring committees whose work is geared towards reaching private sector operators and associations. Mr. Rabeson also reported on the process of the dissemination of the ECPAT Code of Conduct against Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism in the country, underlining that the formal ratification by the companies is less challenging than its actual enforcement on the ground.

[Click here for the presentation of Tokiaritefy Rabeson](#)

Ms. Jacinta Nzioka, Director of Marketing at the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) introduced Kenya's "National Plan of Action on Children 2008-2012". The plan focuses on five strategic areas, namely: (1) prevention, (2) protection, (3) recovery and reintegration, (4) coordination and cooperation, and (5) child participation. The protection component represents one of the most challenging areas, as victims fear of speaking up and poor prosecutorial procedures make the enforcement of

protection strategies difficult. Ms. Nzioka stressed that more awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns are needed to overcome the current challenges. She underlined that extending free education from elementary schools until high school should represent one of the key goals in fighting any form of exploitation of children in future.

[Click here for the presentation of Jacinta Nzioka](#)

Americas

Ms. Magdalena Montero, Adviser to the Minister of Tourism of Uruguay and Representative of the Regional Task Force for the Protection of Children in Travel and Tourism of the Americas (GARA), informed that the Ministry of Tourism of Uruguay has taken up GARA's Executive Secretariat for the 2016-18 period. Ms. Montero stressed that it is essential that the prevention of exploitation of children in travel and tourism be carried out at the regional level through the exchange of best practices and shared prevention programmes. GARA is constituted by active state members, namely Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico, and a number of observers, such as the Interamerican Children Institute from the Organization of American States (OEA) and ECPAT. Constant communication between members is fostered through at least five video conferences and one annual meeting per year. GARA's top priorities for 2017 include the redesign of the overall communication strategy, the launch of an awareness campaign with regional airlines and other transportation companies, and the adoption of ECPAT's Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

[Click here for the presentation of Magdalena Montero](#)

Asia and the Pacific

Ms. Khin Than Win, Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism of Myanmar, informed that the development of public-private partnerships has been at the core of the Ministry's strategic action. Partnerships have been established with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, UNICEF, The Code, Myanmar Responsible Tourism Institute, Child Fund, Terre des Homes, Japan Heart, Save the Children, World Vision and Plan International. In collaboration with UNICEF and other partners, an awareness raising campaign was launched in 2015. The campaign included: training courses on child protection, orphanage tourism and sexual exploitation of children targeting regional/national licensed tour guides, members of Myanmar Tour Guide Association, hotel staff, and other private sector employees. This campaign also included the distribution of 10.000 pamphlets on orphanage tourism that poses a series of challenges. An awareness raising campaign is in place since 2014, entailing the distribution of "Children are not tourist attractions" pamphlets to tourists and the publication of related articles in national airlines' inflight magazines. Future objectives include the translation of the pamphlet on orphanage tourism in more languages, and the undertaking of research in order to develop specific evidence-based policies.

[Click here for the presentation of Khin Than Win](#)

Mr. Mohamed Basheer, Chief Inspector, Head of Family and Child Protection Department, Maldives Police Service, and **Ms. Alice Akunga**, Country Representative of UNICEF Maldives made a joint presentation on the initiatives undertaken in the country. The stunning increase of tourism (with annual tourism arrivals outnumbering national population by 3:1), and its changing nature (with the tourism market opening up to mid- and low-level accommodation), are generating an escalation of the challenges related to child protection. In order to prevent any potential exploitation of children, the Maldives' Police Service is mobilizing resources and implementing a series of actions: in 2015, it has undertaken training with Police from 20 countries, as well as two training workshops to introduce and prepare local police for tackling this challenge. With the support of UNICEF, the training for government officers has involved several key ministries, including those in charge of Immigration, Tourism, Law and Gender, as well as the Prosecutor's Office.

[Click here for the presentation of Mohamed Basheer](#)

Representatives of the tourism industry and civil society

Ms. Clare Jenkinson, Senior Destinations & Sustainability Manager of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), reported on the UK Modern Slavery Act (2015) and its implications for child protection in tourism. The Act legally requires all companies from all sectors with a turnover of £36 million or more to publish a slavery and human trafficking statement, illustrating the steps that the company has taken to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any part of its business operations or supply chain. Ms. Jenkinson illustrated examples of good practices from ABTA members: Thomas Cook published a Code of Ethics and Conduct for its suppliers; TUI Group undertook risk assessment and staff training; Virgin developed a Responsible Supplier Policy and is using *Sedex*, a platform for sharing information about the responsibility performance of suppliers. Ms. Jenkinson concluded that the Act is having a positive impact in the area of child protection in terms of increased risk assessment and human rights due diligence, as well as for fostering public awareness and achieving qualitative improvement of policies.

[Click here for the presentation of Clare Jenkinson](#)

Mr. Amitava Bhattacharya, founder and director of *banglanatak.com*, a Social Enterprise from West Bengal, India, illustrated the enterprise's initiatives to transform rural villages into cultural tourism destinations in order to empower them socially and economically. Mr. Bhattacharya explained that engaging rural communities in cultural traditional practices has proved a much more effective strategy in reducing risks for the rural youth than conventional approaches where the community gets "trickle down" benefits. In particular, Mr. Bhattacharya gave examples of cultural engagement activities promoted in different rural areas which allowed local youth to become more aware of their cultural heritage, fostering pride and creating gateways for local employment. Ultimately, this has led to a reduction of vulnerability to unsafe migration and trafficking, and an improvement in school attendance.

[Click here for the presentation of Amitava Bhattacharya](#)

Ms. Joanna Rubinstein, President & CEO, World Childhood Foundation USA and Board Member of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, spoke of the SDGs as a new global opportunity for the fight against child exploitation, as they open the way for inter-sectorial partnerships. Speaking on behalf of the Global Partnership, Ms. Rubinstein explained that the initiative involves governments, UN agencies, civil society, the private sector, foundations, academics, and children themselves to build political will, promote solutions, accelerate action and strengthen collaboration. The governments that have formally expressed interest in forming part of the initiative are El Salvador, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Montenegro, Nigeria, Paraguay, the Philippines, Romania, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tanzania and Uganda. On the other hand, Ms. Rubinstein recalled that the private sector stakeholders are key partners, and illustrated examples of initiatives that the World Childhood Foundation carried out through such collaboration. In particular, she mentioned the Atlantica Hotels-Childhood Brasil Partnership which provided child protection training to 19,000 hotel staff in Brasil. The collaboration with Ericsson was also mentioned, which led to the launch of a mobile app aimed at equipping adults with the resources necessary to recognize, prevent and respond to child abuse.

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