Committee/Council: Economic and Social Council

Issue: The promotion of sustainable tourism for the protection of the economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous people

Student Officer: Danae –Maria Karantanou

Position: President

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest economic sectors - and continues to have tremendous annual growth rates. However, just like any other form of development, tourism can cause various problems, such the loss of cultural heritage, social dislocation, ecological degradation and economic dependence. Therefore, all tourism activities need to be sustainable; there should be a balance between its economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects. By doing so, sustainable tourism increases the positive contribution of tourism to biodiversity conservation and thus to poverty reduction and the achievement of common goals towards sustainable development.

Moreover, tourism is considered one of the very few sustainable livelihood activities that are accessible to rural or remote indigenous communities, and can ensure access to the 'real' economy for indigenous people. However, tourism is also described as a threat, or a cause of increasing pressure to indigenous communities, because of the escalating interest in nature-based and cultural tourism. As demand for tourism - international and domestic - continues to increase, so too does commercial interest in the improvement and development of the most biodiverse, ecologically fragile, spiritually, culturally and aesthetically rich locations and regions. These so-called "natural and cultural heritage conservation hot spots" are seen as the key to tourism development.

Additionally, indigenous peoples' rights to have access to their land, protected areas, heritage resources and their values are complex and controversial. Discussions are taking place related to the use of bio-resources, land rights and ownership rights of indigenous people. As a matter of fact, effectively planned and sustainable tourism can play a key role in increasing tolerance and respect for diversity of all sorts – biological, cultural, religious and political. The development of ethical tourism can also provide incentives to efficiently support the values and culture of indigenous

people, secure and respect sacred sites, as well as appreciate traditional knowledge. Thus, the tourist industry is a key-component in fostering international support for both cultural and natural heritage conservation, poverty reduction and protection of indigenous communities.

However, if exploitative forms of development prevail, the impact of these forms on the ecology, society and culture can be devastating. Tourism development that does not aim to achieve a balance in all aforementioned fields can threaten biodiversity and agriculture, contribute to the deterioration of cultural and natural landscapes and to the pollution of ecosystems. It extremely reduces water and energy resources all over the globe and, last but not least, drives local communities deeper into poverty.

Picture 1: Ethiopia, Murci Tribe

In the rapidly evolving society of the 21st century, it seems that we have failed to ensure the protection of the rights of indigenous people and establish a sustainable system in order for tourism not to threaten their communities and history. Nowadays, indigenous people still face many barriers to becoming active participants in tourism development and their voices cannot be heard. Poverty and social isolation excludes them from education, health, economic growth and hence their survival and that of their rich cultural and natural heritage. Globally, tourism has been and is still being used as a way to alleviate poverty and this strategy has grown in recent years, leading to a proliferation of theoretical and practical experience. Two leading international strategies, which are explained in this paper, are Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) and Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) and they have been created and designed to enable people in poverty to overcome extreme poverty through tourism activities.

Definition of Key-Terms

Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and live in harmony with the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around

the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples.[1]

Sustainable Tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. Rather than being a type of product, it is an ethos that underpins all tourism activities. As such, it is integral to all aspects of tourism development and management rather than being an add-on component. The objective of sustainable tourism is to retain the economic and social advantages of tourism development while reducing or mitigating any undesirable impacts on the natural, historic, cultural or social environment. This is achieved by balancing the needs of tourists with those of the destination.[2]
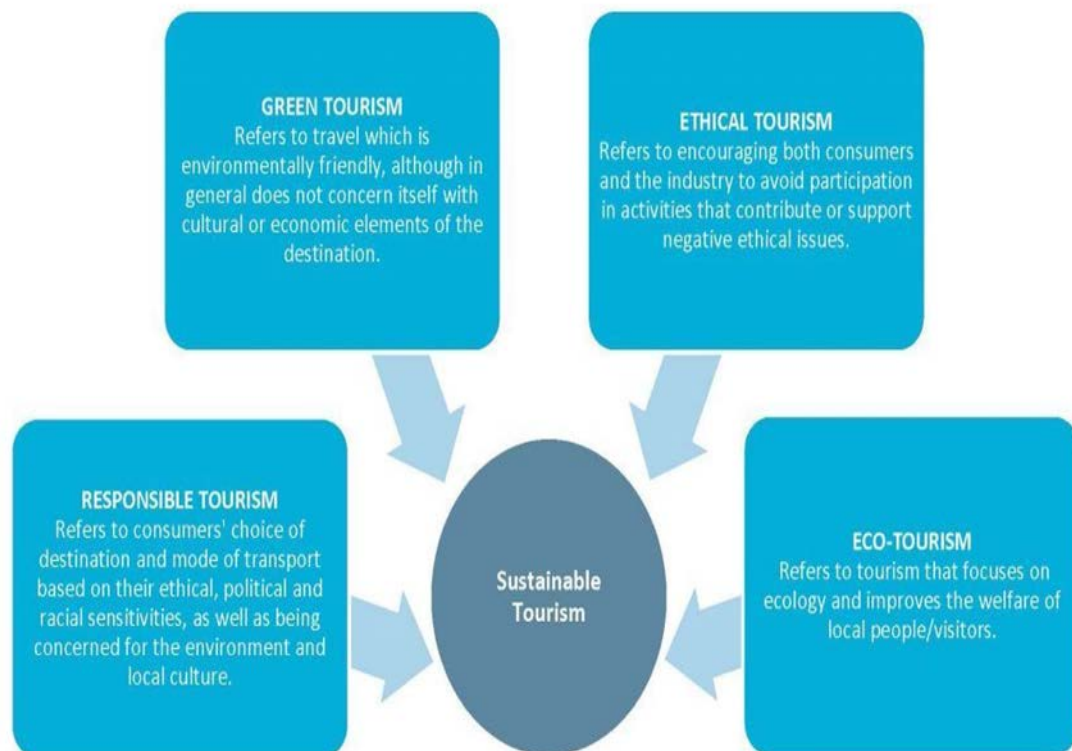
Picture 2: Explaining Sustainable Tourism

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is now defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation

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[1] "Indigenous Peoples at the UN for Indigenous Peoples." United Nations. United Nations, n.d. Web. 04 July 2017.
[2] Defining Sustainable Tourism. N.P., n.d. Web. 04 July 2017.

and education" (TIES, 2015). Education is meant to be inclusive of both staff and guests.[3]

Responsible Tourism

Responsible Tourism is about "making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit." Responsible Tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable.[4]

Pro-poor Tourism (PPT)

PPT can be defined as tourism which provides net benefits for poor people. PPT is not a specific tourism product or sector. It is not the same as eco-tourism or community-based tourism, although these forms of tourism can be pro-poor; i.e. they can bring net benefits to the poor.[5]

Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

As a fundamental frame of reference for responsible and sustainable tourism, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) is a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide key-players in tourism development. Addressed to governments, the travel industry, communities and tourists alike, it aims to help maximize the sector's benefits while minimizing its potentially negative impact on the environment, cultural heritage and societies across the globe. Adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization, its acknowledgement by the United Nations two years later expressly encouraged UNWTO to promote the effective follow-up of its provisions. Although not legally binding, the Code features a voluntary implementation mechanism through its recognition of the role of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE), to which stakeholders may refer matters concerning the application and interpretation of the document.[6]

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[3] "What Is Ecotourism?" What Is Ecotourism? | The International Ecotourism Society. N.P., n.d. Web. 04 July 2017.
[4] Responsible Tourism Partnership. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 July 2017.
[5] What Is Pro-poor Tourism? N.p., n.d. Web. 04 July 2017.
[6] "Ethics and Social Responsibility." Global Code of Ethics for Tourism | Ethics and Social Responsibility. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 July 2017.

Background Information

Explaining the term "Sustainable Tourism"

Picture 3: The three aspects of Sustainable Tourism

When it comes to sustainability, there are three aspects one has to consider: environmental, socio-cultural and economic. In order for tourism to be considered "sustainable tourism", it has to be sustainable in all three areas.

- Environmental Sustainability

This aspect of sustainability is the most often discussed by NGOs, governments and other environmental/scientific groups. Forests, beaches, mountains, monuments and historic buildings – both natural and built environment- must be protected in order for an area to be "environmentally sustainable". In other words, environmental sustainability focuses on ensuring resources in an area will be available for use by future generations and on the viability and health of eco-systems.

- Socio-cultural Sustainability

Social impacts of tourism are the changes in the lives of the people living in destination communities, while the cultural impacts of tourism are the changes in the arts, artifacts, architecture etc. When referring to the socio-cultural impacts of tourism we mean the changes to people's everyday lives and values. Socio-cultural sustainability means being able to deal with the negative effects of tourism and focusing on the positive ones, such as the promotion of cultural exchange leading to multicultural societies and the preservation of local traditions. The only way for this to be achieved is by getting local people involved in the tourism industry of their country or region. This will benefit both visitors

and locals, by offering a more genuine and original experience to tourists, while at the same time giving the local people the opportunity to introduce their culture and lifestyle to the world.

- Economic Sustainability

The last and perhaps the most important aspect of sustainability is the economy. The key to make the tourism industry sustainable is by ensuring its economic sustainability, which –in this case- means, "keeping the money local". Hotels and companies owned and operated by local people will contribute to the local economy and to the drastic reduction of poverty and unemployment in the region. Not only should the community be part of its tourism industry, but they should also share the financial benefits gained from it.

The History of Tourism and Indigenous People

As a matter of fact, tourism can create conflict and resentment with local people, especially when there is a clear negative impact on their country or region. When it comes to indigenous communities the examples of these effects are numerous throughout history and it seems that indigenous people's rights are still being threatened and violated in several cases. Hotels, shopping centers, restaurants, bars, for example, have displaced fishing communities that once lined the coasts of countries such as Malaysia and Thailand. Moreover, indigenous burial sites have been desecrated by the construction of resorts in Bali and Hawaii. The tropical jungles of the Amazon have been destroyed by insensitive tourism operators who do not respect the region and the culture of the local people.

Picture 4: Sitting Bear, an Arikara man by Edward S. Curtis; 1908

In several regions the native people work as low-wage laborers in a tourism industry which promotes and sells their culture and land. Indigenous people are often being treated as "human zoo species" by adventure-seeking travelers. Around the globe there is a huge percentage of illegal trade in wildlife and cultural artifacts. For the previous owners of land, the newly built hotels barely pay them a living wage. Furthermore, some of them are forced into labor to build hotel accommodations. Women, men and even children are exploited by the rapidly growing sex tourism

industry, both in Less Economically Developed Countries and in More Economically Developed Countries. As a result, tourism –if poorly planned and managed- seems to promote foreign domination and dependency, environmental destruction, cultural alienation and the loss of control and identity in the hosting countries.

<u>Indigenous Communities: A new side of our world</u>

In the past centuries, hunters, gatherers and nomads travelled aiming to find land and wildlife to sustain them. They used to travel with the seasons, aware of the fragility of the Earth. Back then, people travelled a lot for a number of different reasons; trade, war, colonization, diseases, religious beliefs and discovery. At the beginning of the 19th century, wealthy Europeans traveled to witness the breathtaking landscapes and to get to know other cultures. Many famous writers and artists wrote stories about such exotic places and the adventures one could live there, romanticizing the Far East and describing the long journeys into the African Continent. Around that time anthropologists started analyzing indigenous societies, scientists began studying wildlife in exotic places and at the beginning of the 20th century, John Muir wrote about travelling through the American south to Alaska and India. The international community drew interest to this new part of the world. Travellers were interested in photography as well. Starting in 1895, mass-produced "view-cards", images of distant cultures and exotic places were posted all around the globe. They provided detailed documentation of places and people and, at the same time, they painted a romanticized and –unfortunately- misleading picture.

Unfortunately, travelers tried to take control of their new "discoveries", the resources and the original inhabitants. The Western World could not understand the philosophy of indigenous people and they turned tourism into an industry, which supported and promoted the use of open land by searching for the "last unspoiled places on earth" and lead to their complete destruction. The rights of the inhabitants were ignored and biodiversity apparently got lost in the "developing" process.

Picture 5: Adivasi Tribe, South Asia

Developing Indigenous People in the Western Image – The Havasupai case

Indigenous people's rights and their survival have been threatened for more than a century by the creation of protected areas, national parks and resorts. These areas were designed and created upon ideals that outlawed their traditional ways of life. As a result, the people who had lived there for centuries were forced from their homelands.

The example of the Havasupai people is just one out of many and it is illustrative of numerous others. According to the Havasupai, an American-Indian tribe who have

Picture 6: Havasupai Falls

lived in the Grand Canyon for at least the past 800 years, the only reason for their existence is to protect the Canyon. They are known as the "Keepers of the Canyon" and they believe that without them the Canyon would be overexploited like the Niagara Falls and other places in the United States.

However, like most indigenous communities, the Havasupai have been forcibly displaced and only a small part of their traditional lands was given to them. By 1919, the year of the establishment of the Grand Canyon National Park, the tribe was restricted to a side canyon and forced by the government to abandon all but 518 acres of its land; they were driven out of their ancient homeland, as their land was consistently being used by the National Park Service. Their homes were destroyed and many Havasupai died due to this traumatic experience. The tribe decided to use the country's judicial system to fight for the restoration of their ancestral land. After years and several court battles, in 1974 they managed to get part of their former homelands– approximately 185.000 –back. In order to survive, the Havasupai turned to tourism, attracting more than 20.000 people annually to the Havasupai Reservation, along with the 4.000.000 visitors that come to the Grand Canyon each year. Hikers, adventurers and nature lovers pay 15$ per person, an amount that is used for the entire Havasupai community.

Picture 7: Havasupai woman

The tribe continues to deal with the effects of tourism, such as noise pollution from the helicopters and the planes that fly over the Grand Canyon. Together with other local tribes and environmental groups they are trying to fight noise pollution and the

impact it has on the canyon and nearby lands. Moreover, during the tourist season, liquid waste is a huge problem with campsite toilets. Tourists damage the new solar toilets, sent by the National Park Service, by using them for garbage. Wildlife of the region is affected by mass tourism. The government now focuses on what is known as "prehistoric Havasupai" sites that are in the government forest areas around the canyon; Havasupai Elders are now called to determine which of these are considered sacred areas and must be protected and kept from visitors.

Hotels, park facilities, jeep and helicopter tours, horseback riding are all available to visitors. At the base of the Canyon there are increasing numbers of rafters, mountain bikers and hikers. The tourism industry around the Canyon continues to grow and the local indigenous people are suffering, watching their homeland getting destroyed by the impact of mass tourism.

<u>«Sustaining the Earth, Rather Than Tourism»</u>

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments and environmental groups are cooperating with indigenous communities in order to promote sustainable tourism and ecotourism. However, indigenous people do not always get informed about the strategies and their consequences. According to Rod Taylor, a member of the North American Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Project, *"when corporations, the military and governments make decisions they make sure they learn everything there is to know -- the pros and the cons -- of planned development before making a decision. What we are saying is that we need to also have that information. We are tired of hearing about the `enterprise concept' which usually promotes only the benefits of `development,' and we need to know the potential downside too. That is the hallmark of informed consent."*

What Taylor believes is that tourism in all its various forms can have a very heavy impact on culture and environment. He mentions that, *"the way that conservation is practiced in the West is viewed as conservation-for-development and that is not necessarily consistent with our traditional view of guardianship and protection. We wouldn't even use the word conservation."*

Heated debate is evolving as more indigenous people express their views and discuss such vital issues; some of them would prefer to adopt the Western style, while others completely disagree with the strategies and goals set by companies and governments. It is up to them to decide how they are going to use their land and whether they want to be part of this global tourism industry, or not.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

<u>World Tourism Organization (WTO)</u>

The WTO (or else: UNWTO) is a United Nations specialized agency aiming to promote responsible and sustainable tourism. It promotes tourism as a path towards the achievement of global economic growth and development and environmental sustainability. It offers support to the tourism industry by advancing knowledge and sustainable tourism policies and instruments worldwide. The organization encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism aiming to increase tourism's contribution to the social and economic development of the international community, while decreasing its negative effects and is promoting tourism as a way to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly focusing on reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide.

WTO has 157 members, 6 Associate Members and 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector.

Ecuador

Around 45.000 people in nine different indigenous nationalities, each with its own culture and language, inhabit the Amazon region of the country, while 7 % of Ecuador's population is of indigenous heritage and another 72 % is of mixed indigenous and European heritage. A large number of tourists is visiting the eastern side of the country's Amazon region, keen to explore the ecosystem, biodiversity, wildlife and culture of the area. In 1986, several nationalities formed CONFENIAE (Confederation of the Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon) in order to promote communitarian development, fight for indigenous people's rights and for the legalization of their territories, and to protect the rain forest. Responsible tourism is being promoted as an alternative income source for many of these indigenous communities. However, the increased economic power brought by tourism, caused inter-tribal conflicts between the indigenous communities (Sionas and Secoyas), due to the fact that the Sionas are trying to monopolize the benefits of tourism and exclude the Secoyas. Moreover, tourism is attracting indigenous children to the foreign life style and thus, threatening the survival of the traditional culture.

Australia

Indigenous Australians are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Australia, descended from groups that existed in Australia and surrounding islands prior to European colonization. The Djabugay people live in North Queensland, a very popular tourist destination. The Tjapukai Aboriginal learn more about the Djabugay culture. In this Park, Djabugay community members present their cultural heritage to tourists. By doing so, they are fighting for the revival of their culture, while strengthening the local economy and gaining access to new employment opportunities. However, the community does not operate as an equal member of the Park and thus, does not have enough power, influence and control in the Park because of the lack of employee and managerial representation. Furthermore, the Aboriginals do not have equal access to the tourism industry and they are usually employed in low-paid positions.

East Africa

In Africa, tourism has a heavy impact on indigenous communities, including economic dislocation, breakdown of traditional values and environmental degradation. People belonging to the Maasai tribe were forced from their homeland and their traditional economic activity was "attacked" for being primitive, undeveloped and destructive. Their culture is being commercialized and not respected by tourist agencies or even tourists themselves. They tourism industry is "selling" their everyday lives, forcing them to perform, as tourists want a taste of

local culture and atmosphere. They Maasai are being used to attract tourists. Such a situation can affect their ethnicity, language, values, culture and religion. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that there are several NGOs and activist groups operating in the region, working and fighting to preserve the cultural and natural heritage.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event

1975	The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) was established for the promotion on responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
1982	Establishment of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP)
1989	Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)
1993	International Year of the World's Indigenous People
1993	First debate on the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)
1995-2004	International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples
1997	Creation of the Indigenous People of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC)
28th July 2000	Establishment of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)
2001	Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
2005-2015	Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples
2007	Establishment of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)
13th September 2007	Adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
22nd -23rd September 2014	The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples
2015	The United Nations (UN) General Assembly approved the adoption of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.
2017	International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)

"Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries."

A/RES/47/75, 85th plenary meeting, 14th December 1992

"The UN General Assembly proclaimed the International Year of the World's Indigenous People with the aim to encourage a new relationship between States and indigenous peoples, and between the international community and indigenous peoples — a new partnership based on mutual respect and understanding."[7]

A/RES/48/163, 18 February 1994

"The United Nations General Assembly adopted resolutions A/RES/48/163 and launched the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004) to increase the United Nations' commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples worldwide."[8]

General Assembly resolution 59/174, General Assembly resolution 60/142, A/60/270

"The Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (2005-2015) was proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 59/174 and the Program of Action was adopted by General Assembly resolution 60/142 and is contained in document A/60/270."[9]

Resolution 6/36, 2007

"The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) was established by the UN Human Rights Council."

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 13rd September 2007

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

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[7] "Indigenous Peoples at the UN For Indigenous Peoples." United Nations. United Nations, n.d. Web. 08 July 2017.

[8] "Indigenous Peoples at the UN For Indigenous Peoples." United Nations. United Nations, n.d. Web. 08 July 2017.

[9] "Indigenous Peoples at the UN For Indigenous Peoples." United Nations. United Nations, n.d. Web. 08 July 2017.

The development of tourism is urged toward a sustainable future which will be achieved through policies and practices recommended by a wide range of international agencies and instruments. These include the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN-WTO), The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), regional UN commissions, international conservation bodies such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), many conservation NGOs and the inter-national banks. It was in 2002 when the International Year of Ecotourism initiated the most extensive gathering of all ecotourism-involved stakeholders who were interested in pursuing forms of tourism that would prove to be of a more sustainable nature. It turned attention and interest on tourism's ecological, social and cultural costs and benefits. In the same year, the same result was achieved by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) which drew attention to how tourism could potentially support the UN Millennium Development Goals. In 2003, the International Ecotourism Society and the Centre on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development prepared 'Rights and Responsibilities' paper, a compilation of Codes of Conduct for Tourism and Indigenous Local Communities which recognized the necessity for sustainable tourism to become 'an instrument for the empowerment of local communities, for the maintenance of cultural diversity and for the alleviation of poverty'.

Organizations, fora and summits, such as the aforementioned, and their associated policies and strategies have increasingly emphasized both the issues faced by, and the opportunities for, indigenous people worldwide, through the discussion on sustainable tourism. For instance, the 5th World Parks Congress, held in Durban, South Africa, labelled tourism as "an increasingly important feature of park management and conservation partnerships". Attempts at coherent and simultaneous management of protected areas by natural resource management agencies and indigenous communities is becoming increasingly common, as are community-conserved areas/indigenous protected areas. There are many cases globally where tourism has proved that conservation can provide support to the development of local and indigenous communities and which demonstrate how these conservation alliances can assist with poverty alleviation in both less and more economically developed nations.

Possible Solutions

Sustainability means, as previously mentioned, establishing a suitable balance between all three aspects of tourism development: economic, socio-cultural and environmental. Therefore, to achieve the sustainability of tourism (a) the environmental resources should be used responsibly by maintaining the necessary ecological processes and protecting natural resources and biodiversity; (b) the culture of hosting communities and the locals must be respected by visitors by protecting built and living cultural heritage and traditional values; (c) long-term economic operations must be ensured by providing financial assistance to stakeholders and fairly-distributed socio-economic benefits; (d) visitors need to learn more about indigenous communities and cultures in order to understand the lifestyle of indigenous peoples and they must be informed about sustainability issues; (e) tourists themselves must promote sustainable tourism practices after learning the importance of sustainable and responsible tourism for the survival of indigenous groups and cultures.

Sustainable and responsible tourism is all about taking into consideration the future economic, environmental and social impacts of implemented practices and strategies. Moreover, governments and NGOs have a key role to play in the management of tourism and in achieving sustainability. They must create an environment that influences or enables the private sector (e.g. companies) to operate in a more sustainable way and influence the behavior of visitors to reduce the negative effects of tourism and increase the positive ones.

On a last note, a balance must be found so that tourism can be successfully managed. For this to be achieved, we must think of long term solutions and realize that change is often gradual. Economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects of sustainable development must include the interests of all stakeholders including indigenous people, local communities, tourists, industries and governments.

Dear Delegates, if you need any help while writing your resolutions, do not hesitate to contact me via my personal e-mail address: danaekarant@gmail.com

Good Luck!

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