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Tourism at the Fifth World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa, 8–17 September 2003

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The Fifth World Parks Congress was held in Durban, South Africa from 8 to 17 September 2003. There were 2600 delegates, 300 accredited journalists and 500 staff and volunteer workers in attendance. This report is a summary of some of the outcomes of the park tourism discussions at the Congress, with particular attention to the role of the Tourism Task Force. It does not attempt to cover the many other issues covered by the Congress. A number of key agencies, including UNEP, UNESCO, WTO, The Nature Conservancy, The International Ecotourism Society, and Conservation International were involved with tourism-related congress main and side events. The Tourism Task Force met on 10 September. The meeting was in three parts.

Part 1 of the meeting was a short introduction to the history of the Task Force, its activities and products. The World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Steering Committee created the Task Force in 1997. Its Terms of Reference can be found at <http://www.ahs.uwaterloo.ca/rec/taskforce/tmsoref.htm>.

From 1997 to 2003, the Tourism Task Force was involved in the development of three major policy documents, as well as many more minor issues.

- *Guidelines for Public Use Measurement and Reporting at Parks and Protected Areas* was published by the IUCN in 1999. It is available in printed form from the publication office of the IUCN in Cambridge, UK. An electronic copy in Adobe pdf form is available from: <http://www.ahs.uwaterloo.ca/~eagles/parks.pdf>. A Chinese version is also available.
- *Guidelines for Tourism in Parks and Protected Areas of East Asia* was published by the IUCN in 2001. This document is available in printed form from the publication office. An Adobe pdf form is available from: <http://www.ahs.uwaterloo.ca/rec/taskforce/eastasia.html>. Chinese and Japanese versions will soon be available.
- *Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Planning and Management* was co-published by the IUCN, World Tourism Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme in 2002. An Adobe pdf form is available from: http://iucn.org/themes/wcpa/pubs/pdfs/tourism_guidelines.pdf. A Spanish version of 1000 copies was released at the World Parks Congress. French and Chinese versions are under way. The 4,000 copies of the first

English printing sold out in early October 2003. Efforts are underway to find the money to reprint this English version.

Part 2 of the meeting dealt with an important current activity, a proposed Congress recommendation on the subject of the relationship of tourism as a vehicle for conservation and support of protected areas. The recommendation had been on the Congress website in draft form for three months for review and comment. It was given attention at the Task Force meeting, and further refined over several more days through comprehensive debate and discussion of many delegates. A copy of this important recommendation is attached to this report.

Part 3 of the meeting dealt with the future, with an hour-long discussion of possible future activities of the Tourism Task Force. The discussion continued further throughout the Congress. Delegates agreed that the long-standing goal of creating a global inventory of park tourism was worthwhile and worthy of continued attention. It was noted that it was regrettable that the agreed-upon collection of data by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) towards this goal during the recent global compendium of the UN List of National Parks and Protected Areas was not accomplished. Nevertheless, the WCMC remains committed to working with the Tourism Task Force to fulfilling this task in the future. One approach would be to undertake regional inventories on a project basis.

Delegates agreed that a valuable new initiative would involve the preparation of Guidelines for Park Concessions, Permits and Licences. The project would fulfil long-standing requests by WCPA North America and many individual park officials for guidance for park managers in this important, but poorly documented area. Officials at the IUCN Washington Office have agreed to make funding applications to specific target agencies in the US for some of this work.

Discussion also made it clear that there is a strong international need for training for current park managers in park tourism. Universities and colleges do a competent job of providing training in this field for younger people. However, many current staff noted that such training is not readily available for those in post, or for older persons transferred into such posts. There is a need to develop an understanding of their needs and then to consider possible delivery routes. This is potentially a very large activity that must be approached cautiously and strategically. Many delegates expressed a desire to be involved in such an activity.

The Task Force members agreed that Tourism should be a full stream at the next World Parks Congress in 2012 or 2013.

The World Parks Congress (WPC) side event dealing with certification in ecotourism produced a website containing material from that effort. This can be found at: http://www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/wpc_workshop.htm.

Summary

Interestingly, a major deficiency in the papers and discussions at the World Parks Congress lay in the consideration of the impacts of the parks and their work on park visitors. Discussions centred instead on the social, economic and cultural impacts of visitors on the parks – an old set of themes. Equally, visitors'

motivations, goal attainment, satisfaction, learning and level of involvement were also ignored. The only major tourism-related area discussed was that of environmental education. The lack of interest by many of the world's park officials in park visitors is a troubling concern evident at the Congress.

Recommendations

The Congress approved a series of recommendations of which Recommendation 12, *Tourism as a Vehicle for Conservation and Support of Protected Areas*, was the most important for this report. It is given below in full.

The world's tourism and recreation sector potentially provides significant benefits to protected areas and associated communities. While tourism alone is not sufficient to support protected areas or community development, it can provide economic benefits, opportunities for communities, opportunities for land acquisition for protected areas, greater appreciation of cultural and natural heritage, greater knowledge of the interplay between humans and their environment, and increased interest in and commitment to the conservation of natural and cultural values. In this context, visitation, recreation and tourism are a critical component of fostering support for parks and the conservation of biological and cultural heritage. Careful and strategic implementation of policy together with proactive and effective management of tourism is essential.

However, the ecological, social and cultural costs of tourism can be considerable. Even limited impacts may have major conservation significance. If not planned, developed and managed appropriately, tourism can contribute to the deterioration of cultural landscapes, threaten biodiversity, contribute to pollution and degradation of ecosystems, displace agricultural land and open spaces, diminish water and energy resources, disrupt social systems, and increase poverty.

Tourism in and around protected areas must be designed as a vehicle for conservation: building support; raising awareness of the many important values of protected areas including ecological, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic, recreational, and economic values, and generating much needed income for conservation work for the protection of biodiversity, ecosystem integrity and cultural heritage. Tourism should also contribute to the quality of life of indigenous and local communities, provide incentives to support traditional customs and values, protect and respect sacred sites, and acknowledge traditional knowledge.

There are many stakeholders concerned with protected areas, and thus managers need resources and training to enable them to work effectively with different constituencies, including the tourism industry, local communities and visitors. There are numerous conventions, charters and guidelines that can be of assistance, including, inter alia:

- (a) The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) *Guidelines on Tourism in Vulnerable Ecosystems*;
- (b) The ICOMOS *International Cultural Tourism Charter: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance*;

- (c) The IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas' (WCPA) publication *Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Planning and Management*;
- (d) The UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*;
- (e) The World Tourism Organisation *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism*;
- (f) *The Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism*.

Therefore, PARTICIPANTS in the Stream on Building Broader Support for Protected Areas at the Vth World Parks Congress, in Durban, South Africa (8–17 September 2003):

(1) RECOMMEND that the tourism sector, including appropriate institutions, associations, and operators, work together with protected area managers and communities to ensure that tourism associated with protected areas, in both developed and developing countries:

- (a) Respects the primacy of the role of conservation for protected areas;
- (b) Makes tangible and equitable financial contributions to conservation and to protected area management;
- (c) Ensures tourism contributes to local economic development and poverty reduction through:
 - (i) support to local small and medium-sized enterprises;
 - (ii) employment of local people;
 - (iii) purchasing of local goods and services; and
 - (iv) fair and equitable partnerships with local communities;
- (d) Uses relevant approaches that encourage appropriate behaviour by visitors (e.g. environmental education, interpretation, and marketing);
- (e) Uses ecologically and culturally appropriate technologies, infrastructure, transport, facilities and materials in and or near protected areas;
- (f) Monitors, reports and mitigates negative impacts and enhances positive effects of tourism;
- (g) Communicates the benefits of protected areas and the imperative for conservation; and
- (h) Promotes the use of guidelines, codes of practice and certification programmes.

(2) RECOMMEND that key decision-makers work with the conservation community, including the IUCN WCPA Task Force on Tourism and Protected Areas, to ensure that tourism:

- (a) Supports the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage;
- (b) Supports local and indigenous community development and economic opportunities:
 - (i) provides political and financial support for the establishment, extension, and effective management of protected areas;
 - (ii) supports implementation of relevant international agreements, national legislation, and guidelines on protected areas;
 - (iii) fosters respect and stewardship for natural and cultural heritage through visitation and education; and

- (iv) promotes the use of culturally appropriate participatory processes.
- (3) THEREFORE RECOMMEND to key international and national agencies, local authorities and the private sector to support research and development to:
- (a) Understand the links between tourism, conservation and community development;
 - (b) Establish reliable data on protected area tourism;
 - (c) Determine optimum types and levels of protected area visitation;
 - (d) Promote appropriate monitoring and evaluation;
 - (e) Promote effective visitor management;
 - (f) Encourage policy development on protected area tourism;
 - (g) Provide appropriate tourism training for protected area personnel;
 - (h) Provide effective interpretation and education;
 - (i) Understand visitor experiences, behaviour and impact; and
 - (j) Develop appropriate tools and techniques for sustainable finance of protected areas through tourism.
- (4) ENCOURAGE dissemination of these recommendations and coordination of their implementation by the IUCN WCPA Task Force on Tourism and Protected Areas.

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