

Ecotourism Key to Eradicating Poverty and Protecting Environment



A landmark resolution recognizing ecotourism as key in the fight against poverty, the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development has been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

In a significant acknowledgment of tourism as a tool for promoting sustainable development, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution stressing ecotourism's role in the fight against poverty and the protection of the environment.

The resolution, entitled, "Promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection", calls on UN Member States to adopt policies that promote ecotourism highlighting its "positive impact on income generation, job creation and education, and thus on the fight against poverty and hunger". It further recognizes that "ecotourism creates significant opportunities for the conservation, protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and of natural areas by encouraging local and indigenous communities in host countries and tourists alike to preserve and respect the natural and cultural heritage".

"UNWTO welcomes the adoption of this resolution on the importance of ecotourism," said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai. "The remarkable support that the resolution has received, from all regions and across the development spectrum, is a clear testimony that sustainable tourism has a vital role to play in a fairer and sustainable future for all."

The resolution, facilitated by Morocco and sponsored by a record 105 delegations, draws on the recommendations contained in a report prepared by UNWTO on the basis of responses from 48 Member States which, in a notable departure from its normal practice, was welcomed by the UN General Assembly.

In line with the recommendations of the UNWTO report, the resolution underscores the need for national tourism plans to account for market demand and local competitive advantages. It also encourages Member States to promote investment in ecotourism, in accordance with their national legislation, including creating small and medium-sized enterprises, promoting cooperatives and facilitating access to finance through inclusive financial services such as microcredit initiatives for the poor, local and indigenous communities, in areas of ecotourism potential and rural areas.

The resolution builds on a UN resolution of 2010 on the same subject, and reflects developments since then, namely the inclusion for the first time of tourism in the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20) and the results of the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity. The resolution keeps ecotourism clearly on the agenda of the United Nations as it requires UNWTO to submit a follow up report to the sixty-ninth session of the UN General Assembly in 2014.

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