
Report of the
1st International Congress on Ethics and Tourism
15-16 September 2011
Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid, Spain

1. The **1st International Congress on Ethics and Tourism** called for the urgent placement of ethics at the core of tourism development, so as to achieve a truly responsible and sustainable tourism sector. Jointly organized by the *Spanish General Secretariat of Tourism and Domestic Trade* and the *World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)*, the event was attended by participants from over 50 countries, bringing together some 350 tourism officials, business leaders, academics, representatives of international organizations and NGOs, and experts in the field of ethics and tourism, over the course of the two-day gathering. The UNWTO **Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations ten years prior to the Congress, set the tone for the event's five panel debate sessions. 33 speakers of the very highest calibre addressed such issues as ethical frameworks for tourism development, fair tourism, sustainable practices in both the public and private sectors, poverty reduction, the prevention of exploitation, gender equality, accessibility, corporate social responsibility, and environmental protection, among others.
2. On the occasion of the Congress, UNWTO and the *United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)* signed a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize UNWTO's support for the UNAOC mandate to "improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions".
3. The two-day meeting took place with the support and participation of the *European Commission, SEGITTUR (Spanish Cooperation for the Management of Innovation and Technology in Tourism)*, the *Madrid Tourist Board*, the *Reina Sofia Museum, Iberia, Qatar Airways, Melia Hotels International* and the *Banesto Foundation*. *EFE* news agency and *BBC World News* acted as the event's principal media partners.

Opening Ceremony

4. **Mr. Joan Mesquida**, Secretary General for Tourism and Domestic Trade of Spain, opened the Congress by summarizing the core concern of the event: not only must all sectors follow ethical principles, but now is the time to "bring principles into practice". Cautioning governments and businesses that, even in the current precarious economic climate, "a race for figures to the dearth of quality will benefit nobody", he affirmed the ways in which "more ethics means more development". Mr. Mesquida referred to the Congress as an ideal opportunity to assess the degree of implementation of the ethical framework for the tourism sector, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, and acknowledged that, to date, its translation into concrete action left room for improvement. Nevertheless, he affirmed, "we have made every effort to ensure that those countries in which tourism development is just beginning, and with which we sign cooperation agreements, govern according to these principles and demand the same of the multinationals that invest in their countries."
5. **Mr. Pedro Ortún**, Director of the Directorate General for Enterprise of the European Commission, identified several key actions taken by the Commission, such as the Calypso Project, a social tourism venture which seeks to encourage and fund out-of-season tourism by making holidays more accessible for four key groups: senior citizens, young persons, persons with disabilities and those with low income levels. Inspired by the Code of Ethics, the project was established in 2009 with the additional aim of strengthening the concept of European citizenship. He also elaborated on the EDEN initiative (the European Destinations of Excellence Awards), which celebrated the successful rehabilitations of former industrial facilities in 2011, and has clearly demonstrated the positive effect of the European Union promoting sustainable tourism projects.

6. **Dr. Taleb Rifai**, Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), pointed to the extraordinary growth of the tourism sector over the past decades and the opportunities for jobs, economic development and social empowerment this has brought to millions, but alerted that tourism growth also brings challenges that cannot be ignored. "A tourism sector without an ethical conscious can harm our planet, it can shred the very seams of society," he stressed, "We need to place ethics, responsibility and sustainability at the core of all our actions and ensure the adoption of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism." He highlighted the theme of 2011's World Tourism Day, "*Tourism – Linking Cultures*", as a clear example of the potential of tourism to contribute to the aims of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. "With nearly one billion tourists crossing international borders," he noted, "tourism is one of the best ways for people to experience, interact with, and learn from, new cultures. This cultural exchange spurs dialogue among nations and peoples, fostering mutual understanding, respect and ultimately, peace." Above all, Dr. Rifai stressed that **people** were at the heart of tourism, claiming that a failure to recognize this fact would threaten to reduce travel to a "meaningless activity." "The development of tourism," he affirmed, "belongs to the people of a country." The Secretary-General invited speakers and audience members alike to discuss the issues at hand "frankly and openly", while encouraging industry representatives to "assume the high moral ground" and provide an example to other sectors as to how to "forge a better and more promising world for the generations to come".

7. A video message from **H.E. Dr. Michelle Bachelet**, Executive Director of UN Women, was played at the close of the Ceremony, addressing the importance of responsible tourism for women's empowerment and gender equality worldwide.

Inauguration

8. In his keynote address, **H.E. Mr. Jorge Sampaio**, the High Representative of the United Nations for the Alliance of Civilizations, spoke of the need to move towards a new global, sustainable society underpinned by a strong ethical foundation. "Sustainability requires a common vision of basic values in our increasingly interdependent world," he asserted. "Because it involves the movement of millions of people, tourism can play a pivotal role in creating a shared sense of responsibility".

1st Session: An Ethical Framework for the Responsible Development of Tourism

9. The moderator of the event's first session, **Dr. David De Villiers**, Chairman of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE), underscored the need for immediate and concerted action to tackle the ethical challenges posed by the rapid expansion of the sector.

10. **Mr. Sebastián Escarrer**, Vice President of Melia Hotels International, stressed that tourism bears a responsibility to communicate ethical values and to implement sustainable practices, given the sector's proximity to its client and the high level of human capital in its composition. This was even more important, he argued, given the abhorrent misappropriation of tourism infrastructure for unacceptable ends, such as the exploitation of children. Melia Hotels International signed a Commitment to the ECPAT Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, and would sign a Commitment to the Code of Ethics on the second day of the Congress.

11. **Mr. Daniel Peyron**, General Director of La Rochelle Business School, highlighted how important it is for institutions, sector representatives, tourists and communities to co-exist and commit themselves to responsible tourism. In this regard, he emphasized, training plays a key role which needs to be afforded greater recognition.

12. The Minister of Tourism of Ecuador, **H.E. Mr. Freddy Ehlers**, underscored the importance of **action** during his presentation of key initiatives undertaken in his country's tourism sector. The Minister asserted that a great proportion of Ecuador's youth has little faith in the effectiveness of international organizations, admitting that "I have seen that sometimes this is the case. There is a difference between what people say and what they do, and the problem is getting worse". He also underlined the need to recognize and evaluate the negative environmental and social impacts of tourism. "Tourism pollutes," he stated, "Nobody is quoting the figures on this and we need a White Paper on tourism's environmental footprint". Similarly, he pointed to the adverse consequences of unethical behaviour, particularly the problem of "human greed. Greed rules the world, and up until recently the European and US model was sold to us as the one to follow". Demonstrating that his words were being acted upon, he announced that four days previously the President of Ecuador banned all casinos and gambling houses in the country, and had also limited the consumption of alcohol at certain times of the day. With 200 indigenous communities hosting tourists in Ecuador, the Minister said he was intent on promoting tourism with a conscience, and invited Congress' participants to adopt the term "conscience" in addition to ethics. He concluded that "If we don't change, we won't change the world".

13. **Ms. Caterina Cittadino**, Head of the Department for the Development and Competitiveness of Tourism of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Italy, spoke at the panel on behalf of her country's Tourism Minister, H.E. Ms. Michela Vittoria Brambilla. With the aim of advancing the principles of the Global Code of Ethics, she related the main objective of the Italian Chairmanship of the UNWTO Executive Council, namely "to promote the development of a practical guide and an international legal instrument for the protection of travellers/consumers, especially in cases of emergency." To this end, she said, "an ad hoc working group is assessing the rules in force in the 154 UNWTO Member States and Italy expects the first results to be available at the next UNWTO General Assembly". Ms. Cittadino also made reference to Italy's role as the host country of Permanent Secretariat of UNWTO's World Committee on Tourism Ethics.

2nd Session: The Global Code of Ethics as a Guarantor of Equality and a Bulwark against Exploitation

14. **H.E. Ms. Consuelo Crespo**, President of UNICEF Spain, acted as moderator of the second panel of the Congress. Centered on issues of equality and exploitation, the session particularly resounded with calls to recognize the access to tourism as a right, the need to share experiences, and to promote the training of industry workers in order to prevent, identify and provide support in cases of exploitation or discrimination.

15. Social tourism which generates benefits for all sectors of society was the principle subject discussed by **Mr. Javier Bustamante**, President of SEGITTUR. He explained the Calypso Programme at the European level, highlighting its focus on four segments of society: youth, seniors, persons with disabilities and low-income families. He noted the ways in which this programme and similar initiatives seek to ensure the right to leisure of all persons, as enshrined in the Code of Ethics.

16. **Ms. Kathleen Speake**, Executive Director of ECPAT International, revealed that over three million children are exploited by people who travel for sex tourism purposes. She highlighted the work of ECPAT, which fights for the elimination of child prostitution, pornography and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes, by providing shelter and counselling, lobbying local government for increased policing and enforcement of legislation, and training hotels and other tourism organizations to be aware and act against this inexcusable phenomenon. She pointed to the unfortunate link that exists between child exploitation and tourism, and underscored the urgent need for action, for concrete endeavours which can be monitored and go beyond mere marketing. She also made reference to the fact that many of Spain's leading tourism companies were to sign ECPAT's Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism during the second day of the Congress, an initiative spearheaded by UNICEF and Melia Hotels International, and supported by UNWTO.

17. **H.E. Ms. Aminata Traoré**, former Minister of Culture and Tourism of Mali, held that tourism should be not only an activity that generates economic benefits, but also an avenue to rethink the world. She articulated the frustration of many destination countries with regards to the current patterns of growth in the sector. "We are destinations, we are not people," she commented, voicing the feelings of many in Mali and elsewhere who are dissatisfied with the slow pace of change towards more responsibility in tourism.

18. Director of Universal Accessibility of Fundación ONCE, **Mr. Jesús Hernández Galán**, drew attention to the importance of accessibility as part of responsible development in tourism. "To talk about accessibility," he said, "is to talk about rights, but the rights of access are contravened in subtle ways." He indicated that while those with disabilities were not prohibited from travelling outright, bad design often prevents them from doing so. "Good design capacitates," he surmised, "bad design incapacitates". Mr. Hernández Galán appealed to the industry to ensure that the whole value chain is made accessible, from internet sites, to transport, hotels and leisure activities. Staff in the sector, he urged, must be adequately trained to assist persons with disabilities. With 80 million persons in Europe suffering from some form of disability, he pointed out that meeting their needs was both ethically necessary, and makes sound business sense.

3rd Session: Fair Tourism and the Fight against Poverty

19. The third session, focusing on tourism and poverty reduction, was moderated by **Mr. Zoltan Somogyi**, UNWTO Executive Director for Member Relations and Services.

20. **H.E. Mr. Ezekiel Maige**, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism of Tanzania, asserted the importance of tourism as a key sector for economic development while highlighting some of the main challenges it faces. He pointed to, for instance, the balance between the conservation of resources and their responsible use in tourism, the relationship between quality and affordable pricing, and the benefits of tourism for local communities.

21. The Executive Director of the Millennium Foundation, **Mr. Henk Mulder**, recalled the importance of advancing towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. He specifically cited how initiatives such as the MASSIVEGOOD project, funded by voluntary contributions, have succeeded in improving the health conditions of countless communities. The moment was ripe, he indicated, to further undertake and promote such initiatives, arguing that “now is not the time to take our foot off the pedal.”

22. **Mr. Harold Goodwin**, Director of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism, reiterated that taking action and responding to the challenges faced by the sector was imperative. He claimed and it was not enough to have ethical aspirations; responsible actions must be embarked upon concurrently. These undertakings, he said, should be clearly demonstrated, with transparency being the key.

23. The problem of the dispersion of initiatives, their low level of continuity and effectiveness, and the de-professionalization of the sector, were the focus of **Mr. José María de Juan**, Vice President of the European Alliance of Responsible Tourism and Hospitality (EARTH). He referred to certain micro-projects, such as community businesses in South America, which were sometimes “incapable of working together”. Coordination and the provision of more business-related assistance in community-based tourism initiatives, he held, were necessary in order to ensure their sustainability. He also noted the lack of continuity in the funding of initiatives, causing several to flounder before they could achieve tangible results. “Don’t fund projects and then just let them sink,” he urged, “Often the funding stops before people even know about them”.

4th Session: Sustainable Tourism

24. The fourth session of the Congress, moderated by **Mr. Pedro Ortún**, Director of the Directorate General Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission, centered on sustainable tourism.

25. **H.E. Mr. Marthinus Van Schalkwyk**, Minister of Tourism of South Africa, pointed to the significance of international agreements in overcoming the challenges of the sector, particularly in areas such as air transport, and visas. In his view, voluntary ethical frameworks should slowly be replaced by hard law, and suggested that states begin working towards this through the G20.

26. The importance of crossing the values of destinations with the values of travellers was raised by **H.E. Mr. Paulos Geroulanos**, Minister of Culture and Tourism of Greece. This not only facilitates intercultural exchange, but helps to preserve local cultures and involve communities in tourism development with benefits for all.

27. The Director-General of Turespaña, **Mr. Antonio Bernabé**, underlined the need for a suitable regulatory and financial framework in order to obtain results. Reporting on Spain’s achievements in terms of protecting environmental and cultural resources, he emphasized that at the national level, all available tools should be used to ensure sustainability, notably legislation and operational instruments.

28. **Ms. Erika Harms**, Executive Director of Global Sustainable Tourism Council, which seeks the implementation of its criteria for Sustainable Tourism worldwide by building an international membership of global stakeholders, emphasized the need to “come together” with one international standard. She highlighted the importance of promoting three types of actions: communication, execution and follow-up, based on the common framework of global criteria for sustainable tourism.

29. The Director of the Banesto Foundation’s *Solidarity and Sustainable Tourism Programme*, **Mr. Gabriel Vitoria**, presented the undertaking which seeks to promote economic and social development in Africa and Latin America by supporting entrepreneurial initiatives by women in the tourism sector.

5th Session: Corporate Social Responsibility

30. **Mr. Juan de la Mota**, President of Spanish Network of the UN Global Compact, acted as the moderator of the fifth session of the Congress, aimed at identifying the priorities of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and fostering its implementation. The panel debate recognized that the implementation stage presented organizations with their biggest challenge, and sought to discuss ways in which to surmount these difficulties.

31. The Chairman of the Executive Board Members of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), **Mr. Hiran Cooray**, reflected on the need to advance in the implementation of the Code of Ethics, while acknowledging the challenges faced by the

sector's actors in doing so in a climate of economic crisis, in which there is ever greater pressure to generate profits. In his view, the slow pace of progress in tourism ethics over the last decade was chiefly because "there is nothing in the balance sheet to measure [ethics]". He was of the opinion that tourists are not willing to pay extra for ethical practices, and held that greater tourist responsibility was necessary to achieve greater results.

32. Representing trade unions, **Mr. Norberto Latorre**, President of the Hotel, Restaurant, Catering and Tourism Trade Group (IUF), expressed the need for the participation of workers in the design of CSR policies. He argued that Corporate Social Responsibility "cannot be left solely in the hands of private enterprise, as it needs to go further than ticking boxes and meeting legal requirements." Instead, he said, "It is social dialogue which makes CSR credible".

33. With reference to his company's CSR policies, the Director of Government and External Affairs of Thomas Cook Group, **Mr. Andrew Cooper**, listed areas of concern such as air emissions, water scarcity and land access.

34. **Ms. Berta Valverde**, Publicity and Corporate Sponsorship Director of IBERIA spoke of the company's extensive programme "*Mano e Mano*", responsible for transporting humanitarian aid around the world, offering international and national volunteering projects, as well as its transit of computers to those in need in association with IT sector leader Amadeus.

35. **Mr. Felipe González-Abad**, Senior Advisor at Amadeus IT Group, presented the company's CSR programme, demonstrating its link to Amadeus' main activities and stressing the importance of having local partners. Corporate Social Responsibility, he intimated, was interpreted by the enterprise as a commitment to contribute to social and economic development in the least privileged parts of the countries in which it operates. As a leading global distribution system (GDS), with expertise as technology providers and developers, he noted that Amadeus sought to aid in development through the application and provision of technology.

36. The Chair of the Sustainability Committee of the German Travel Association (DRV), which represents the world's largest outbound market, **Mr. Andreas Müseler**, noted that he is also the Chairman of the Tour Operators Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI), hosted by UNWTO in Madrid. Given the cultural and ecological footprints left by tourism, he cautioned that responsibility was paramount and that tourists need to be well informed prior to, and during, their travels. He commented on the initiatives undertaken by his organization, such as the building of schools in Sri Lanka, in order to help ensure the distribution of tourism's benefits throughout this destination country.

Presentation of the General Conclusions of the Congress

37. In conclusion, **Mr. David Eades**, presenter of BBC World News, enumerated the advances made since the formulation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, and underlined the importance of coordinating efforts to move forward in the achievement of its objectives. He invited those in attendance to continue their work by pooling efforts and acting on the management, implementation, training and promotion of responsible tourism. He also noted that Ecuador had generously offered to host the 2nd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism.

38. Mr. Eades noted the frustration expressed by representatives of developing countries, and juxtaposed this to the "Slowly, Slowly – softly, softly" attitude favoured by other sectors. Recalling the extraordinary stories of achievement recounted at the Congress, by the Banesto Foundation, ECPAT, the Millennium Foundation, and the ONCE Foundation, among others, he stressed that it was now the responsibility of every tourism stakeholder to publicize these advances. Successful projects, he suggested should be advertised just as holidays are advertised. The sector should "keep telling people what is being achieved"; customers should be reminded time and again if the company they engage with adheres to the Global Code of Ethics. Moreover, he pointed to the potential utility of "negative campaigning", i.e. holding non-ethical operators publically accountable for their practices. He urged that their behavior should be made an "issue of SHAME."

39. He further recounted the importance of getting people involved in ethical behaviour. Referring to the South African Minister of Tourism's suggestion that voluntary frameworks should be gradually replaced with laws, Mr. Eades observed that the more voluntary codes are pushed, the easier it will be to introduce enforcement within the industry. By enforcing laws, he argued, tourist's habits and their penchant for cheap holidays, regardless of the consequences, can be changed much faster. The experience of Madrid, the capital of a country going through extremely difficult economic times, and yet a city teeming with visitors, he indicated, illustrated how tourism is an industry able to make a real difference to the economic fortunes of states.

Despite slow progress in responsible tourism over the past decade, he asserted that positive results can be achieved if actors come together in a drive for consistency and collaboration, and consciously resolve to achieve much more.

Closing Ceremony and Signing of the Ethical Codes

40. Prior to the Closing Ceremony, fourteen of Spain's most prominent tourism companies **signed** a Commitment to the *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism*, as well as a Pre-agreement to the *ECPAT Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism*. These enterprises were: Agrupación de Cadenas Hoteleras de Baleares, Amadeus IT Group, ASHOTEL (Asociación Hotelera y Extrahotelera de Tenerife, La Palma, La Gomera y El Hierro), Federación Española de Asociaciones de Agencias de Viajes, Federación Empresarial Hotelera de Mallorca, Grupo Barceló, Grupo Iberostar, Grupo Lopesan, Iberia, Loro Parque, Melia Hotels International, National Atesa, NH Hoteles, and Orizonia. **Ms. Consuelo Crespo**, President of UNICEF Spain, explained the initiative as the Closing Ceremony commenced.

41. The **Closing Ceremony** was held in the presence of T.R.H. the Prince and Princess of Asturias, the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Trade of Spain, H.E. Mr. Miguel Sebastián, the Vice President of the European Commission, Mr. Antonio Tajani, and the Secretary-General of UNWTO, Dr. Taleb Rifai.

42. Hailing tourism as a vector of progress and well-being which contributes to economic and social development, **H.E. Mr. Miguel Sebastián**, Minister of Industry, Tourism and Commerce of Spain, underscored the importance of ethical principles in building an ever more sustainable tourism culture. He pointed out that, since 2005, the Spanish Government had undertaken to disseminate the Code of Ethics within the country's tourism sector, and carried out a series of actions to comply with their commitment to implement the Code. Above all, he stressed, symbiosis should exist between ethics and tourism.

43. **Mr. Antonio Tajani**, Vice President of the European Commission, acknowledged the importance of his institution's cooperation with the Government of Spain, before elaborating on the Commission's commitment to the principles of sustainability. He stressed that promoting sustainable tourism implies a need to be aware of the responsibilities incumbent on all stakeholders – whether public institutions, private enterprises, tourists, or host communities. Since 2001, he said, the Commission has led the struggle to ensure the implementation of the Code of Ethics, in conjunction with UNWTO. To this end, 21 specific initiatives have been spearheaded, including the European Destination of Excellence Network (EDEN), the Calypso Programme, European cultural itineraries which act as instruments for cultural dialogue, and a planned campaign to raise tourist awareness on travelling responsibly. He drew attention to the upcoming European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, which will use the principles of the Code of Ethics as a basis, while adopting them to the European context.

44. **Dr. Taleb Rifai** observed that the number of participants and the high calibre of the panel debates illustrated clearly that “ethical tourism is a cause worth caring about, a cause worthy of discussion and, above all, a cause worthy of action”. Expressing his satisfaction that action was beginning to be taken, for instance in the form of the first ever private sector Commitment to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, he announced that a landmark *Memorandum of Understanding* would be signed later in the day between UNWTO, Fundación ONCE and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), with the aim of developing ever more accessible tourism for persons with disabilities. The challenges engendered by the unguided growth of tourism, he cautioned, have provoked lamentably negative consequences. Yet, Dr. Rifai noted, as the discussions at the Congress demonstrated, tourism's potential to do good remains enormous, so long as all actors in the sector commit to making the vision of ethical, responsible and sustainable tourism a reality.

45. **H.R.H. Felipe de Borbón, Prince of Asturias**, noted that although tourism is rightly recognized as a major vehicle for the generation of wealth and employment in Spain and around the world, further efforts are clearly needed to ensure that its development is guided by an ethical foundation, enabling it to remain sustainable. Ten years since its adoption was an opportune moment to analyze the Global Code of Ethics, evaluate the achievements made in its implementation, identify the challenges that remain, and debate the practical application of its principles. Commending the organizers and participants for their involvement, and congratulating the signatories of the ethical codes, the Prince applauded the Congress as an important first step: a platform of international cooperation to promote the development of increasingly ethical tourism.