

World Tourism Day 2007 - “Tourism Opens Doors For Women” - Think Tank: The Role Of Women In Tourism

Bentota, Sri Lanka, 27 September 2007

On the occasion of World Tourism Day 2007 hosted by Sri Lanka in Bentota, a Think Tank was held on this year’s theme “Tourism Opening Doors For Women” and its inter-relationship with the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Under the Chairpersonship of H.E. Mrs Nilofar Bakhatiar, a group predominantly of women who have played prominent roles in Tourism around the world discussed:

- The importance of women in the tourism sector.
- Improving the role of women in tourism.
- Accentuating the role of women particularly in developing countries.

During the discussion the following issues were raised:

1. The need for AWARENESS CREATION about the opportunities for women and their concerns amongst general policy makers and amongst women themselves.
2. Creating APPROPRIATE POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT with tourism as a primary component so that the sector is integrated into mainstream policy making.
3. The requirement not only to open doors, but to MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR WOMEN TO GO THROUGH THEM, including good training, development programmes, targeted information, decent and equal pay, good career development, family support structures and frameworks for ensuring self-respect.
4. The PARTICULAR OPPORTUNITIES presented by agro tourism, ecotourism, health and wellness, and the creative sector.
5. The importance of GETTING THE DIVERSE PRIVATE SECTOR ACTIVELY INVOLVED AS WELL AS NGOs AND THE MEDIA; with a fundamental requirement for the Public Sector to put in place and implement legislation for equal opportunity, equal pay and fair working conditions. In respect to the latter, note was taken of the need to address unreasonable working hours particularly for women with families.
6. The value of SHOWCASING WOMEN with fulfilling jobs at all levels, as well as those showing leadership and career progression.
7. The timeliness of this discussion in relation to broader action on gender equality and of UNWTO, WITH THE SUPPORT OF UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), CHAMPIONING THIS ISSUE, as well as the importance of carrying this forward into a defined programme and action plan.
8. The DANGER OF SELF-DELUSION in considering primarily the beneficial aspects of tourism and women while ignoring the darker side of exploitation, harassment, abuse and marginalization.
9. The significance of INCREASED ACCESS TO CREDIT FACILITIES to encourage women entrepreneurs, and the proven reliability of women in meeting the conditions.
10. The absence of RELIABLE INFORMATION at a global, regional and national level, and the importance of such information for effective decision making & monitoring.

Against this background the following conclusions were reached:

- To initiate a UNWTO – UNIFEM annual report on the state of Women in Tourism.
- To make this an ANNUAL FORUM and to establish a broader biennial worldwide conference.
- To foster a NETWORK of activists, ambassadors and advocates to support the work of the UNWTO Special Advisor on Women in Tourism, and the establishment of a TASK FORCE to develop a draft Programme of Activity.
- To put in place a DATA COLLECTION system including desk research, case studies and alignment with the Tourism Satellite Account where feasible.
- To expand the website www.tourismgender.com into a PORTAL for gathering and presenting information, and serving as a framework for continuing focus; as well as a resource pool for gathering and sharing.



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- To develop with partners an AWARENESS CAMPAIGN aimed at the industry, governments, media and women themselves, as well as the creation of a global AWARDS SCHEME.
- To strongly urge UNWTO and its Member States to take affirmative action within their power to actively involve women, from all social, economic and cultural spheres, into strategy, policy and operational decision making.
- To urge UNWTO to emphasize these issues within the framework of its Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.
- World Tourism Day 2007 is an occasion to celebrate women's achievements in the tourism sector and stimulate continuous action in support of UN's 3rd Millennium Development Goal: Promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment through to 2015 and beyond.

World Tourism Day is commemorated on 27 September each year by appropriate events on themes selected by UNWTO's General Assembly, on recommendation of the Executive Council. This date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the adoption of the UNWTO Statutes on 27 September 1970 and designated as World Tourism Day by the UN General Assembly.

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