



WORLD TOURISM DAY
**TOURISM AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR
POVERTY ALLEVIATION, JOB CREATION AND SOCIAL HARMONY**
RAMOTSWA, 27 SEPTEMBER 2003

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UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE

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It gives me great pleasure to participate in this event in Ramotswa, as a representative of the United Nations, and to present the message by the Secretary General of the World Tourism Organisation, Mr. Francesco Frangiali.

I am particularly happy to be present because of the theme chosen for the celebration this year: How tourism can contribute to poverty eradication, creation of productive jobs, and also be an important dimension in the much needed creation of social harmony.

I mention this not least because the relationship between TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT has been of great interest to me ever since I went to Africa on my first assignment as a newly graduated political scientist, writer and journalist back in 1976. I spent some time in Senegal, then a major growth area for Western European and Danish tourism, and I wanted to find out to what extent the so-called 'MASS TOURISM' version of tourism in fact benefited ordinary people in Senegal – or the contrary: destroyed cultures and communities without leaving any significant economic and social benefits behind.

I have to admit that my conclusions back then were not too positive or optimistic. Mass tourism existed in a strangely artificial world, like an island within the host country, with Northern tour operators reaping the major benefits. And leaving a trail of destructive social problems behind – prostitution, drugs, a widening gap between rich and poor. And much less social harmony than could have been the case.

Fortunately we have come a long way since then. Today we know much more about the linkages between investments in tourism infrastructure, bringing in people from around the world to different destinations, and how this benefits the nation as a whole and the communities directly affected in particular.

In his message for World Tourism Day, WTO Secretary-General, Mr. Francesco Frangialli, makes it very clear that we need to see tourism as part of our struggle to defeat poverty and inequality:

"IN OUR APPARENTLY WEALTHY WORLD, POVERTY STILL AFFECTS FOUR BILLION PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, OF WHICH TWO BILLION ARE LIVING WITH LESS THAN ONE DOLLAR A DAY."

At last year's World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, WTO presented the SUSTAINABLE TOURISM - ELIMINATING POVERTY. This programme falls within WTO's broader "Liberalization with a Human Face" strategy, which has been designed to link the Organization's Global Code of Ethics with the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the pro-development and sustainability thrusts of the Summits in Doha (on trade), Monterrey (on funding) and Johannesburg (on sustainability).

In this context, the objective of sustainable tourism for poverty elimination is closely linked to the MDGoal to halve extreme poverty by 2015. This was underlined by Mr. Frangialli at the recent Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Cancun, Mexico.

We often forget how important tourism actually is. But it is a fact that tourism is an important export for 83 per cent of developing countries, and it is the main export for one third of them. In 2000, developing countries recorded 292.6 million international arrivals, an increase of nearly 95 per cent on the figures for 1990. Furthermore, in the least developed countries there has been a 75 per cent increase in international arrivals in the past decade. Tourism is the main source of foreign exchange earnings in the 49 least developed countries.

How can we then improve the link between tourism and poverty eradication? Well, there are a number of proven strategies that can be used to increase overall economic benefits, in ways that have a poverty reduction focus. These include

attempts to attract higher-yield market segments and increasing tourists' length of stay plus visitor expenditure, developing complementary products, spreading the benefits of tourism geographically, enhancing local management of tourism and partnerships, reducing the seasonality of tourism and increasing employment and training.

But we live, as we all know, in a world confronted by great challenges and plagued by many types of conflicts. Mr. Frangialli is nevertheless optimistic in his message:

"IN A YEAR SHAKEN BY POLITICAL TURMOIL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL DISASTERS, INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS AND NEW DISEASES THAT HAVE AFFECTED TOURIST MOVEMENTS, WE ARE MORE CONFIDENT THAN EVER THAT TOURISM HAS THE CAPACITY TO SUCCESSFULLY ADDRESS SOME OF THE MAIN ISSUES WHICH ARE AT THE ROOT OF SUCH PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY EXTREME POVERTY AND SOCIAL HARMONY."

"WE INVITE ALL TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS, PARTICULARLY NATIONAL TOURISM ADMINISTRATIONS AND THE PRIVATE TOURISM SECTOR, TO STRENGTHEN THEIR ACTIVITIES WITH THIS NEW, POVERTY-REDUCTION FOCUS. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THEY WILL FIND NUMEROUS WAYS TO COMBINE SOLIDARITY WITH PROFITABILITY, NATIONAL TOURISM GROWTH WITH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE POOR, AND LONG-TERM BUSINESS SUCCESS WITH SOCIOECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY."

The World Tourism Organisation is not the only one believing in the potential of tourism. His Holiness Pope John Paul II has sent out a message underlining the fact that "TOURIST ACTIVITIES CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN FIGHTING POVERTY" and that "TOURISM SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A SPECIAL EXPRESSION OF SOCIAL LIFE WITH ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS, AS WELL AS CONSEQUENCES THAT ARE CRUCIAL TO INDIVIDUALS AND PEOPLES".

We all know that Botswana has an enormous potential for tourism, some of which has already been tapped, and some than can be further developed. From UNDP we fully support attempts to ensure that tourism does not end up being a profitable source of income for a small elite, but a genuine contribution to the new Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Government, and the attempts to develop sustainable livelihoods for poor people.

THANK YOU!