



## **TOUR OPERATORS INITIATIVE**

FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

### **Activity Report 2006**

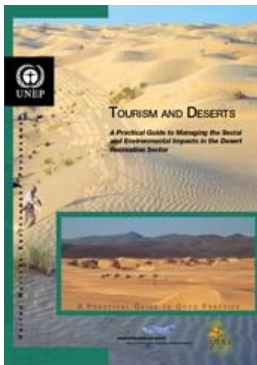
Tour Operators' Initiative (TOI) transferred its Secretariat from the United Nations Environment Programme in Paris to the headquarters of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in Madrid. "This move opens up new and exciting possibilities for our work," said TOI Chairman Tom Selännemi. "The UNWTO network will help open doors, especially to decision makers in tourism destinations, which will greatly support the integration of the concept of sustainability into tourism development".

Welcoming TOI to Madrid, UNWTO's Chief of the Sustainable Development of Tourism Department, Eugenio Yunis, said: "In their designing of holiday packages, and with their direct influence on the tourism supply chain, tour operators have a unique opportunity to exercise great influence on the level and type of tourism development that is carried out around the world.

"As the United Nations General Assembly has clearly stressed, tourism has an important role to play in eradicating poverty, advancing economic and social development, contributing to the conservation of natural and cultural environments and improving the quality of life for all peoples, as well as in promoting international peace and understanding."

On 5 October 2006, TOI was also granted the status of an Association. This transformation which would not affect the structure, objectives and rules of TOI, would help the Initiative get even more visibility and credibility.

#### **Tourism and Deserts: A Practical Guide to Managing the Social and Environmental Impacts in the Desert Recreation Sector**



A roundtable discussion focusing on the issue of sustainability in desert tourism was organized during the celebration of the World Environment Day 2006 in Algiers, 4-5 June.

On this occasion, UNEP/TOI launched the publication "Tourism and deserts: a practical

guide to managing the social and environmental impacts in the desert recreation sector".

This Guide aims at providing a framework for tour operators, hotel owners, car rental companies, etc., to implement best practices and create and develop mechanisms to enable the different actors involved (governments, NGOs and local populations, among others) to find together the balance required for the sustainable development of desert tourism.

A self-assessment check-list integrates the publication to help tour operators adapt their business to customer demands and needs for a more responsible approach to tourism in the desert, which represents a unique opportunity for local communities to combat poverty – since desert areas are mostly located in developing countries, which have limited resources.



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### COOPERATION WITH DESTINATIONS

**Itacaré (Brazil).** In the context of the implementation of the Tourism Strategic Plan for Itacaré (Salvador de Bahia), called Itacaré 2015, the Tour Operators' Initiative held a Pilot Project Workshop on 28 November 2005.

At the very beginning of 2006, two Brazilian NGOs - the Jewish Brazilian Social Welfare Association (UNIBES) and the George Mark Klabin Association (GMK Associação) - have proposed to TOI to work together on a Capacity Building Cooperation Project for the Itacaré community to contribute to the efforts made so far by the Initiative to make of Itacaré a sustainable tourism destination. The project would concretely help the youngest fight poverty and unemployment.

**Side (Turkey).** TOI Board Members visited Side, 15-16 May 2006, to evaluate the progress achieved especially with regards to solid waste treatment and sewage water treatment.

During the visit, discussions were held with the Governor of Manavgat, Mr. Fikret Dayioglu and the Mayors of Side, Mr. Osman Delikkulak, and Colkali, Mr. Hasan Coskun, who is also the chairman of MATAB.

They all expressed support for the TOI pilot project and in many occasions it was pointed out that the TOI work in Side had concretely helped and speeded up the process of improving the environmental infrastructure.

The next follow-up visit will be scheduled when inspections to the waste water treatment plants in operation can be made and it can also be established that the old landfill in Side is no longer in use.

**Cooperation Agreement with WWF.** TOI and WWF held a Workshop, Mallorca (Spain), 13 November 2006, to discuss the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement, signed in Cologne, 5 October 2006.

The Cooperation Agreement with WWF can be considered an example of TOI's renewed commitment to invest more on practical projects/activities and to further implement TOI's best practices in destinations.

Main aim of the Agreement is to create a network of exemplary tourism destinations where conservation and economic objectives support and mutually reinforce each other, by establishing a communication platform that will catalyze concrete synergies between tourism companies and WWF conservation activities for the conservation of biodiversity - at the beginning in marine and coastal ecosystems.



[From left to right: Tom Selänniemi – Chairman of TOI and Deputy Managing Director of Aurinkomatkat, Finland – and Alfred Schumm - Head of Marine Programme, WWF Germany – signing the Cooperation Agreement in Cologne, Germany, 5 October 2006]



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### SPREADING THE WORD ON SUSTAINABILITY

In 2006, the Tour Operators' Initiative has organized and participated in many events, such as:

- Ninth Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF), Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 7-9 February 2006
- Second International Forum on Solidarity Tourism and Fair Trade (Chiapas, Mexico, 24-27 March) / Foro Internacional de Turismo Solidario y Comercio Justo (FITS)
- Workshop on the issue of sexual exploitation of children in tourism, Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, 3-4 May 2006 – organized by DRV, German Travel Association, together with ECPAT-Germany and GTZ
- Workshop on "Conservation in action: joining forces to put standards into practice", Playa del Carmen, Mexico, 23-24 May 2006 - organized by the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL), UNEP and WWF
- 30<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee, Vilnius, Lithuania, 8-16 July 2006
- TOI special activity on best practices and problems of Mallorca - jointly with the Institute of Tourism Strategy of the Balearic Islands (INESTUR), Mallorca, Spain, 16 November 2006

In 2006, within a new communication strategy, TOI started publishing quarterly newsletter and in November decided to work on a new web-site to be on line in 2007.



[Participants in the special activity at the "finca" (estate) Galatzó, 16 November 2006]

### For more information on TOI:

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