

## **Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism**

**In the framework of the UN International Year of Ecotourism, 2002, under the aegis of**

**the United Nations Environment Programme UNEP and the World Tourism Organization WTO , over one thousand participants coming from 1 countries, from the pub IC, private and non-governmental sectors met at the World Ecotourism summit, hosted in Quebec City, Canada, by Tourisme Québec and the Canadian Tourism Commission, between 19 and 22 May 2002.**

The Québec Summit represented the culmination of 18 preparatory meetings held in 2001 and 2002, involving over 3,000 representatives from national and local governments including the tourism, environment and other administrations, private ecotourism businesses and their trade associations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and consultants, intergovernmental organizations, and indigenous and local communities.

This document takes into account the preparatory process, as well as the discussions held during the Summit. Although it is the result of a multistakeholder dialogue, it is not a negotiated document. Its main purpose is the setting of a preliminary agenda and a set of recommendations for the development of ecotourism activities in the context of sustainable development.

The participants at the Summit acknowledge the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, August/September 2002, as the ground-setting event for international policy in the next 10 years, and emphasize that, as a leading industry, the sustainability of tourism should be a priority at WSSD due to its potential contribution to poverty alleviation and environmental protection in critically endangered ecosystems. Participants therefore request the UN, its organizations and member governments represented at this Summit to disseminate the following Declaration and other results from the World Ecotourism Summit at the WSSD.

The participants to the World Ecotourism Summit, aware of the limitations of this consultative process to incorporate the input of the large variety of ecotourism stakeholders, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local and indigenous communities,

Acknowledge that tourism has significant and complex social, economic and environmental implications,

Consider the growing interest of people in traveling to natural areas,

Emphasize that ecotourism should contribute to make the overall tourism industry more sustainable, by increasing economic benefits for host communities, actively contributing to the conservation of natural resources and the cultural integrity of host communities, and by increasing awareness of travelers towards the conservation

of natural and cultural heritage,

Recognize the cultural diversity associated with natural areas, particularly because of the historical presence of local communities, of which some have maintained their traditional knowledge, uses and practices many of which have proven to be sustainable over the centuries,

Reiterate that funding for the conservation and management of biodiverse and culturally rich protected areas has been documented to be inadequate worldwide, Recognize that sustainable tourism can be a leading source of revenue for protected areas,

Recognize further that many of these areas are home to rural peoples often living in poverty, who frequently lack adequate health care, education facilities, communications systems, and other infrastructure required for genuine development opportunity ,

Affirm that different forms of tourism, especially ecotourism, if managed in a sustainable manner can represent a valuable economic opportunity for local populations and their cultures and for the conservation and sustainable use of nature for future generations,

Emphasize that at the same time, wherever and whenever tourism in natural and rural areas is not properly planned, developed and managed, it contributes to the deterioration of natural landscapes, threats to wildlife and biodiversity, poor water quality, poverty, displacement of indigenous and local communities, and the erosion of cultural traditions,

Acknowledge that ecotourism must recognize and respect the land rights of indigenous and local communities, including their protected, sensitive and sacred sites,

Stres that to achieve equitable social, economic and environmental benefits from ecotourism and other forms of tourism in natural areas, and to minimize or avoid potential negative impacts, participative planning mechanisms are needed that allow local and indigenous communities, in a transparent way, to define and regulate the use of their areas at the local level, including the right to opt out of tourism development,

Note that small and micro businesses seeking to meet social and environmental objectives are often operating in a development climate that does not provide suitable financial and marketing support for this specialized new market, and that to achieve this goal further understanding of the ecotourism market will be required through market research at the destination level, specialized credit instruments for tourism businesses, grants for external costs, incentives for the use of sustainable energy and innovative technical solutions, and an emphasis on developing skills not only in business but within government and those seeking to support business solutions,

In light of the above, the participants of the Summit produced a series of

recommendations to governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, community-based associations, academic and research institutions, inter-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, development assistance agencies, and indigenous and local communities, presented in an annex to this Declaration.