

BIOSPHERE – ARONA

ARONA DECLARATION

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS IN TOURISTIC DESTINATIONS

We, the participants of the International Conference "Sustainability and Competitiveness in Tourist Destinations", held in Arona, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain, from 15-16 June, 2017, on the occasion of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development,

Recognizing that sustainability is no longer just an option or an attribute, but an irreplaceable commitment to guide tourism development in destinations, and that today, competitiveness and sustainability have become an inseparable binomial in any future tourism policy;

Recognizing also sustainable tourism as the one that respects both the local inhabitants and travellers, and is responsible for both the cultural heritage and the environment;

Concerned by the negative effects and impacts of tourism development on some destinations, such as those related to resource misuse, land degradation, or impacts on biodiversity and aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, destruction of cultural resources, or increasing social inequalities;

Convinced that by adopting appropriate policies, tourism in destinations can contribute to gender equality, sustainable local development, conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, heritage protection, as well as offering solutions to many other challenges currently facing our world;

Recalling the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism approved by UNWTO and adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations; and the recommendations and guidelines provided by the various multilateral conventions and agreements relating to the environment and culture, such

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as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);

Emphasizing that tourism destinations are called to significantly reduce their ecological footprint and that, as a result, tourism can become a driver of innovation, and of the development of green, inclusive and low carbon economies;

Convinced that tourism must be a key player in the current battle against climate change, where coastal and island destinations are presented as the main victims, but also as potential advanced models for mitigation through the commitment to sustainability;

Whereas progress towards the development of sustainable destinations is a process of shared responsibility affecting the tourism industry, services, local authorities, civil society and tourists;

Aware of the inescapable need to actively contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the new United Nations framework on sustainable development, and to commit to the achievement of the targets outlined, explicit in each of its goals;

Following the guidelines, principles and appeals expressed in the World Charter for Sustainable Tourism +20, adopted in 2015, as well as the goals set for the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development;

We advocate for a broad alliance between tourist destinations in favour of sustainability, expressed in the following principles and guidelines for action:

Preserve the heritage of tourist destinations

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Establish agreements between the main actors of the destination oriented to safeguard the natural heritage and the diversity of its cultural expressions, including the tangible and intangible heritage that it holds, and considering them as basic assets of tourism today.

Contribute to the creation, development and implementation of sustainable and innovative tourism products and services that encourage the respectful use of the natural and cultural heritage, which can transmit the values of the destination and its identity through the tourist experience.

Reinforce the economic and social responsibility of tourism

Evaluate the social impacts throughout the life cycle of the destination, including the planning and design phases of the projects, which can allow to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts.

Implement the necessary measures to maximize the economic benefits of tourism in the host community; redistributing wealth, minimizing leaks and creating strong links with the local economy of destination and other economic activities in the environment.

Foster quality economies, creating a responsible offer of local products and services in partnership with responsible customers.

Strive to make tourism an inclusive social experience and ensure its accessibility, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and people.

Ensure integrity and environmental well-being

Manage the natural diversity of the destination in a sustainable way and, if necessary, restore it; Respect the integrity of vulnerable ecosystems, critical habitats and endangered species, and protected areas, also considering the volume and type of tourism that natural resources can withstand.

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Advance towards an ecosystemic vision on the planning of tourism at the destination, reducing its ecological footprint, considering the services and products supplied by the own ecosystems, and establishing territorial strategies and the design of adaptive, intelligent and of minimum impact infrastructures.

Encourage the efficient use of resources and promote responsible consumption

Increase efficiency in resource management in the context of a circular economy, avoiding waste generation, increasing efficiency and reducing consumption and pollution.

Apply intelligence for improving efficiency in the use of resources, particularly the scarce and non-renewable, increasing the performance of the tourism companies of the destination.

Promote responsible consumption and production practices throughout the tourism services and activities chain, supporting local green economies and proximity consumption.

Encourage the necessary measures to transform tourism destinations into areas with more efficient productive tourism systems, making optimal use of the natural and cultural environment, and human capital and local knowledge.

Urge tourism companies, search engine managers, travel agencies and operators, in markets of origin and at the destinations, to adopt a responsible approach on the supply, and commit themselves to promoting responsible consumption practices.

Make innovation in sustainability a competitive advantage of destinations

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Reinforce innovation as a key factor of competitiveness, along with quality, efficiency, marketing, human resources and knowledge.

Promote innovative public and private practices capable of applying methodologies and strategies that respond to business and management models based on creativity and local talent, aimed at generating new services and sustainable tourism products.

Apply innovation in all non-technological areas, such as the generation and design of new products and services, process improvement, market, and organizational and institutional innovation, always considering in this context that only destinations that are sustainable and non-seasonal can become competitive.

Take advantage of the opportunities of the green technological revolution, incorporating new information and communication technologies; and the wide range of renewable energy solutions and efficient lighting, waste management, efficient water management, sustainable mobility, intelligent building and infrastructures, which would support sustainable destinations in optimum market conditions nowadays.

Support the development of intelligent, efficient and sustainable tourist destinations, capable of developing environments where technology is integrated in all areas within the destination itself, placing visitors and residents at the core of all actions.

Enhance the capacity of the tourism companies and organizations of the destination to improve environmental performance and sustainable practices through innovation.

Be able to turn the different facets of sustainability into attractive and competitive vectors in the destinations, designing and generating imaginative and innovative products and activities supported in their different dimensions.

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Commitment to climate

Reaffirm at a practical level the commitment of each destination to the Paris Agreements, establishing the necessary measures from the sector and from the local administrations that allow reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases; aiming with this commitment to promote a future of emissions free tourist destinations and offset the carbon footprint of tourists.

Create favourable frameworks at a destination, regulatory and market level, for the transition to a 100% renewable energy supply for the sector, including coverage of electricity, heat, thermal comfort and power needs, while incorporating efficiency and energy savings.

Aim for sustainable mobility and for the use of collective systems and zero or low emissions transports, recognizing these actions as substantial improvements in the tourist experience and the environmental quality of the destination.

Develop Participatory Governance of Destinations

Ensure that tourism destination governance includes all stakeholders, especially at a local level, and that the roles and responsibilities of each are clearly defined.

Recognize the need to unite voices, add resources and plan, with a long-term horizon, the transition towards sustainable destinations.

Actively involve the local community in planning and decision-making and provide capacity building to make it a reality.

Striving for sustainable and competitive tourism model in destinations requires a long-term vision, capable of identifying the necessary changes and opportunities from a shared perspective of all the actors, defining clearly the transition process as reflected in the Arona Memorandum.

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Consolidate the commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Working in harmony with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), tourism destinations are called to promote sustainable tourism as a tool for development, competitiveness and well-being; encouraging their full integration into the policies of each destination, and emphasizing their role as a catalyst for development and sustainable development.

This requires substantial changes in policies, business practices and consumer behaviour, with the aim of achieving a more sustainable tourism sector.

As a transversal activity and depending on the characteristics of each destination, the tourism sector can contribute substantially to each of the SDG by different routes:

Goal 1. Promote an inclusive development of tourism, and enhance its capacity to mobilize resources for poverty eradication, social protection, equitable distribution of the benefits of tourism, and empowerment of disadvantaged groups

Goal 2. Increase food safety, supporting sustainable agriculture and fisheries; as well as promoting and integrating the production, use and sale of local products in tourism destinations

Goal 3. Contribute to the improvement of health care in the destination, the promotion of healthy tourism, as well as the prevention of health risks.

Goal 4. Promote inclusive, equitable and quality education and training in tourism, as well as lifelong learning opportunities for local communities

Goal 5. Defend gender equality and women's empowerment, including women's participation in the decision-making process at all management levels, and in the provision of tourist experiences.

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Goal 6. Ensure the intelligent and efficient management and use of water, respecting the water cycle and the capacity of the water resources in the destination, in addition to the availability of water for all.

Goal 7. Bet on energy sustainability and on the search of innovative ways to stimulate new investments that can generalize the use of renewable energies and energy efficiency measures, in the perspective of moving towards 100% renewable destinations.

Goal 8. Provide new avenues for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth of the destination, supporting entrepreneurship on sustainable tourism and ensuring decent and productive employment in the sector.

Goal 9. Promote innovation and applied intelligence tourism as a vector of sustainability and competitiveness, also promoting sustainable and resilient infrastructures, as well as the regeneration of degraded areas.

Goal 10. Remove the barriers that limit the integration of people and incorporate equality and opportunity criteria in all links of tourism, including the challenge of universal accessibility.

Goal 11. Make destinations more inclusive, creative, safe, resilient and sustainable, and preserve their cultural heritage and spaces of coexistence.

Goal 12. Incorporate consumption patterns and sustainable production along the entire value chain of tourism production, betting on the circular economy and the efficient use of resources.

Goal 13. Mobilize the resources and innovation capacity needed to create favourable frameworks for low-carbon climate-friendly initiatives in key areas such as sustainable mobility, energy, building and use of materials, moving towards the concept of CO₂-free destinations.

Goal 14. Implement strategies and measures for the conservation, protection and restoration of aquatic ecosystems and their biodiversity in view of the potential impacts of tourism on coastal destinations, as well as supporting

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the sustainable management of fishery and aquaculture resources in relation to the tourist activity.

Goal 15. Assist the conservation and preservation of biodiversity in situ and in the environment of the destination, increasing the conservation of native flora and fauna, respecting terrestrial ecosystems by freeing them from any form of contamination or dumping, and sensitizing tourists and residents on its importance.

Goal 16. Respect the cultural diversity of visitors and residents, and foster tolerance, interculturality and the culture of peace.

Goal 17. Reinforce public-private partnerships and partnerships with other sectors and civil society of the destination. Establish alliances with other destinations for the exchange of experiences and good practices, under the premise of sharing to compete.

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