



ECO Principles for Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable Tourism in the ECO region meets the needs of contemporary generation (tourism stakeholders) without compromising the ability of the region's future generation to meet their needs. It leads to manage all available resources in such a way that economic, social, cultural and aesthetic necessities can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological biodiversity and life support systems in the Region.

Sustainable tourism in the ECO region should seek a balance among (a) economic benefit and investment; (b) social participation, including local communities, with direct earnings, and seeking preservation and consolidation of its cultural values and traditions; (c) conservation and protection of environment and biological diversity, taking into account the introduction of education and dissemination of information to promote an environmental consciousness among the local population and visitors.

ECO Sustainable tourism development is conducted (operate) in the framework of sustainable development while addressing the natural, cultural and human environments. It calls for special priority in the matter of cultural diversity and respect for the human dignity of both local communities and tourists. It should meet the economic expectations and environmental requirements of destinations. It is considered the establishment of stakeholders' alliances based on sustainability criteria, an integrated policy approach, consideration of regional culture and economy, participation of all actors including active role for industry in sustainable tourism development.

Sustainable Tourism Development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

ECO regional sustainable tourism development, a mean to ensure country planning in each ECO Member States, is mutually supportive and a common approach for integrated tourism development to be observed in the region. It provides an overall regional framework for maximized economic benefits of tourism avoiding destinations degradation from tourism activities. It fulfills the strategic objectives identified by ECO Vision 2025 for "establishing a peaceful and green tourism destination with diverse products and high quality services in the Region" based on the following principles:

1) Principle of Inter-generational Equity

This principle oversees the preservation of the natural and environmental resources for the benefit of the next generation and guarantees the safeguarding of the tourism resources of the Region (by present generation) for future generations. To observe Intra-generation Equity in regional tourism development, the Principle of Prevention Action and Precautionary Principle based on international law should be taken into consideration.

2) Principle of Intra-generation Equality

This principle applies for fair use of natural resources by present generation to address their development needs and economic growth as well as social welfare. It also implies that use of shared natural resources by one State should fairly take into account the developmental needs of other State.

3) Principle of Integration development and environment

This principle implies the need to ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into tourism development programs, with a view to achieving sound, continuous and sustainable economic growth as well as ensure tourism development proposals designed to meet international guidelines for sustainable development and integrate to national development plan. To observe the integration principle in regional tourism development, the principle of right to development, the polluter pays principle, principle of dissemination of environmental information; principle of environmental impact assessments based on international law should be noted.

4) Principle of sustainable use of natural and biodiversity resources

It considers the optimal use of environmental resources, maintain essential ecological processes and conserve aesthetic values as well as biodiversity resources of host communities. The principle of sustainable use of natural resources aims to ensure the exploitation of natural resources in a sustainable, appropriate, rational and/or prudent manner. Its approach is to focus on the adoption of standards governing the usage rate of natural resources in tourism development process, particularly rare and precious resources such as water and energy, rather than their preservation for future generations. To observe this principle, the principle of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources for considering ecosystem approach in tourism development plan in ecologically sensitive areas and protection and rational exploitation of ecosystem biodiversity, species diversity, and genetic diversity should be applied.

5) Principle of preservation of cultural identity

This principle deals with the need to respect, preserve and support the identity, integrity and legacy of local and indigenous cultures in tourism destinations. This principle has a meaningful linkage with the principle of carrying capacity and should be analysed with

the principle of the participation of the local community in the management of tourism destinations.

6) The principle of carrying capacity

This principle addresses the need to identify the limits of social and environmental capacities of tourism destinations and reflect them in relevant policy and planning, in order to absorb tourists without submerging and overwhelming local culture and causing environmental damage. The principle of carrying capacity often calls for a restriction (control) on tourism to avoid cultural and environmental degradation.

7) Principle of cultural and natural heritage and landscape

This principle addresses the need for the collective protection of natural heritage sites of outstanding universal value and promotes landscape protection, management and planning, in tourism destinations and their buffer zones, and to retain a harmony with the cultural and natural heritage of the area.

8) The participatory principle and partnership of all stockholders

The principle of partnership addresses the need to provide an appropriate environment in which all stakeholders have the opportunity to conduct their affairs and hear and be heard. The participatory principle also implies the need to have shared responsibility at all levels and within all processes. It implies that the role of all stakeholders including ECO tourism industry, local and regional investors, local community, government representatives, international organizations, NGOs and environmental groups on the management and decision making process at tourism destination should be guaranteed. It also observes the need for active participation and involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples in the decision making process of tourism development and management at ECO tourism destinations.

9) Principle of integrated sustainable tourism planning

This principle describes the need for the integration of ECO regional and national sustainable tourism strategies, policies and planning into overall national development plans. Such integration is crucial for the sustainability of tourism activities and development in destinations in the Region. It also focuses on the need for cross sectorial integrated planning and projects as well as creation of chain production in tourism industry across the Region.

10) The principle of committed tourism industry

This principle applies to the participation, involvement, engagement, and commitment of the tourism industry to short, medium, and long-term policy setting and decision making and their implementation and management processes regarding sustainable tourism activities. It also considers that the sustainability of tourism activities in ECO tourism destinations depends on the approaches of the regional and international tourism industry and the types of services and products to be offered at destinations and the fact that short term interests of tourism business should transform to mid and long- term one by the

tourism industry through, inter alia, close partnerships with government and civil society, better environmental management and practices, higher commitments to engender a new culture of accountability and apply sustainable consumption and production patterns to tourism activities in ECO tourism destinations.

11) The principal of tourism safety and right to rest and leisure

The principle of tourism safety addresses the need to ensure the security and safety of visitors and their belongings, as a necessary precondition to establishing a sustainable business in ECO tourism destinations and observes the need to respect law and value of the visiting country by tourists. This principle also implies the right of everyone to rest and leisure as an inalienable part of human rights and applies to the right of all persons to enjoy reasonable work hours, periodic holiday with pay and freedom of rest and movement without limitation. It also considers the right of visitors to have easy access to ECO tourism destinations while addressing seasonality of tourism.

12) The Principle of sustainable transport development

This principle addresses the role of sound, safe and sustainable transport system in sustainable development of ECO tourism destinations. It also addresses the needs for reliable and economically viable connectivity system in the ECO region to provide market friendly access to these destinations through integrated destination access strategies in our Region.

13) The Principle of incentive measures and voluntary initiatives

This principle addresses the use of incentive measures and voluntary initiatives as socio-economic tools to serve the participatory principle, and raises the issue of environmental consciousness, dissemination of information and capacity development in ECO tourism destinations.

14) The Principle of development of suitable indicators and standards

This principle addresses the need to develop basic indicators and standards to monitor the progress of the sustainable development of tourism, and to assist decision-makers and policy-makers in focusing on the sustainability of tourism activities and development in ECO Region.

By implying this principle, indicators and standards can translate physical and social science knowledge into manageable units of information that can facilitate the decision making process. They can help measure and calibrate progress towards sustainable development tourism goals as indicated in vision 2025. They can also provide early warning, sounding the alarm in time to prevent economic, social and environmental damage. This principle has links with the sustainability principle.

15) The Principle of sustainable consumption and production pattern in tourism industry

This principle addresses the need to eliminate unsustainable production and consumption patterns in ECO tourism destinations, in order to minimise depletion and reduce

pollution. It regulates consumers' behaviour towards sustainable consumption and assists the tourism industry in fulfilling its responsibility and commitment to the environment.

16) The Principle of financial resources and investment protection in tourism

This principle suggests an appropriate international and regional financial mechanism to address the investment needs of ECO tourism industry and alleviate the financial constraints of ECO sustainable tourism developments. It addresses the need for proper mechanism and national legislation to protect income investment and confront with financial constraints which affect the proper implementation of ECO tourism action plan.

Acknowledging the necessity to educate and mobilize the ECO community about sustainability and sustainable principles of tourism, the application of such principles should be made on all ECO Tourism Policies and Development Plans, enabling the pursuit of such targets in an effective and efficient manner.
