

**WCC-2016-Res-060-EN**  
**Improving standards in ecotourism**

OBSERVING that in 2014 tourism contributed USD 1.2 trillion (nearly 10% of global Gross Domestic Product) to the global economy, accounted for 1 in 11 jobs worldwide, and is one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world;

RECOGNISING that tourism has been highlighted in United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 8, 12, and 14 as a tool for sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production practices, and for the conservation and sustainable use of nature and natural heritage;

FURTHER OBSERVING that nature-based tourism is a major tourism sector, making up more than 25% of the global travel market;

NOTING that the term 'ecotourism' is frequently applied to this type of tourism but that governments, NGOs and the tourism industry have overlapping yet differing definitions, interpretations, and few precise standards for ecotourism, nature-based tourism or geotourism (based on geodiversity and geological heritage);

AWARE that the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution for the *Promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environmental protection* and believes that "ecotourism creates significant opportunities for the conservation, protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and of natural areas";

ALSO RECOGNISING that IUCN agrees "ecotourism can be a driver of sustainable development...if it is carefully conceived, well-managed and strictly controlled" and has undertaken significant work (e.g. guidelines and workshops) to help improve development and operation of tourism;

ALARMED that collective efforts have not yet resulted in improved practices globally and that ecotourism can often be associated with tourism operations and activities that have severe negative impacts on communities, biodiversity and geodiversity, geological heritage, places of geological interest, wildlife and the natural environment; and

RECALLING Resolutions 11.8 *Balanced Tourism* (Banff, 1972), 1.32 *Ecotourism and Protected Areas Conservation* (Montreal, 1996) and 5.114 *Promotion of sustainable tourism, rural development and the value of natural heritage* (Jeju, 2012), which further illuminate the benefits of tourism but remind us of the negative consequences to people and nature because of a lack of monitoring, oversight, and management of industry practices;

**The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Hawai'i, United States of America, 1-10 September 2016:**

1. REQUESTS the Director General, Commissions and Members to support an initiative, in the spirit of the One Programme, to:
  - a. ensure that environmental, economic and social impacts and opportunities of ecotourism are sufficiently acknowledged in the IUCN Programme;
  - b. expand sustainable tourism guidelines to include explicit ecotourism best practices, including an updated IUCN definition of ecotourism, relevant standards and indicators for culturally sensitive community engagement and welfare, environmental learning, appropriate infrastructure and tourist behaviour, to seek the prevention of negative anthropogenic influence on species, ecosystems and more;
  - c. work with existing national, regional and international certification schemes, standards and guidelines focused on ecotourism in order to improve conservation outcomes, including by encouraging the uptake of best practices and the adherence to and strengthening of globally accepted standards; and
  - d. create and deliver training opportunities for ecotourism governance, auditing and certification, and the implementation of best practices for ecotourism development and management; and

2. CALLS ON IUCN Members and ENCOURAGES other governments, parastatal organisations, researchers, developers and tourism industry professionals to:

a. conduct transparent impact assessments and periodic monitoring of ecotourism, and broadly share data for research and evolution of ecotourism best practices;

b. work with existing national, regional and international certification schemes, standards, and guidelines focused on ecotourism to encourage the adoption of standards and norms that ensure terms that assert, or may imply, positive conservation outcomes (such as 'ecotourism' or other terms capable of deriving similar expectations from consumers) are only used and promoted when consistent with the updated IUCN definition and guidelines; and

c. promote and seek auditing and certification for ecotourism in landscapes and seascapes of conservation value.