



We protect children from sex tourism.



World Tourism Day and Responsible Tourism | 2011



Since 1980, World Tourism Day has been held for the purpose of fostering awareness among the international community of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic value. Currently, it seeks to address global challenges outlined in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to highlight the contribution the tourism sector can make in reaching these goals. This year's World Tourism Day will be held on 27 September 2011 with the theme: Tourism – Linking Cultures. UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai said: *'With nearly one billion tourists crossing international borders, tourism is one of the best ways for people to experience, interact with and learn from new cultures. This cultural exchange spurs dialogue among nations and peoples, fostering mutual understanding, respect and ultimately, peace'*.

The link between cultures and tourism becomes even clearer when we look at sustainable and responsible tourism. Sustainable tourism aims to make a low impact on the environment, indigenous peoples and local communities, ensuring that development brings a positive experience for local people, tourism companies and tourists. Translated into responsible tourism, this means that everyone involved in tourism (which includes individuals, organisations and businesses) is asked to take responsibility for their actions and the impact of their actions. Both responsible and sustainable tourism are aimed towards achieving sustainable development. With this aim towards making a low impact on local communities comes the need to incorporate ethics and child protection into the tourism sector. Everyone must be aware of the issue of commercial sexual exploitation and make sure there is no exploitation and taking advantage of children in vulnerable situations.



Back in 1999, the UNWTO adopted the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide key-players in tourism development. Addressed to governments, the tourism sector, communities and tourists alike, it aims to help maximise the sector's benefits while minimising its potentially negative impact on the environment, cultural heritage and societies across the globe. Ten years after its official adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001, the first International Congress on Ethics and Tourism was held in Madrid, Spain, on 15-16 September 2011. The Congress brought together over 450 tourism officials,

business leaders, international organisations and experts in the field of ethics and tourism to debate how to guarantee a truly responsible and sustainable tourism sector. The event opened with calls to intensify efforts to place ethics at the core of tourism development.

Several distinguished international guests spoke about the need for ethics, sustainability and responsibility to be incorporated within the tourism sector. UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai emphasised the extraordinary growth of the tourism industry over the past decade and the opportunities for jobs, economic development and social empowerment it has brought to millions of people. However, growth in the tourism sector also comes with challenges that cannot be ignored.



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Mr. Rifai stressed: *'A tourism sector without an ethical conscience can harm our planet. We need to place ethics, responsibility and sustainability at the core of all our actions and ensure the adoption of and adherence to the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism'.*

ECPAT International's Executive Director Kathleen Speake was one of the distinguished speakers at the Congress. She highlighted The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, an industry driven responsible tourism initiative in collaboration with ECPAT International, funded by UNICEF and supported by the UNWTO. Ms. Speake said: *'Industry, governments and the community are all responsible for ensuring that tourism development is conducted in a sustainable and ethical way that does not facilitate the exploitation of children'.* She emphasised the need for implementing principles and values into concrete action to combat sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. The ECPAT network and nearly 1,000 industry partners in 40 countries promote and implement The Code. The Code members share a 'duty to care' to ensure that children everywhere enjoy their fundamental rights, free and secure from all forms of exploitation.



Fourteen of Spain's most prominent tourism businesses committed to the Global Code of Ethics and Tourism. Eleven of those joined during the Congress: the Baleares Hotel Chains Group (Agrupación de Cadenas Hoteleras de Baleares, ACH), Ashotel (Canary Islands), the Spanish Federation of Travel Agencies (Federación española de Agencias de Viajes, FEA AV), the Mallorca Hotel Federation (Federación Hotelera de Mallorca, FEHM), the Iberostar Group, the Lopesan Group, Iberia, Loro Parque S.A, National Atesa, NH Hotels and Orizonia. Four other companies are in the process of joining. By signing The Code of Ethics pledge, companies are committing to uphold, promote and implement the values of responsible and sustainable tourism development. The majority of the companies also signed The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.

While there has been progress in recognising responsibility in sustainable tourism, more action is needed from all actors involved in the tourism industry. The First International Congress on Ethics and Tourism has been a very welcome initiative to emphasise the need for integrating ethics into tourism development. The focus should now be on getting as many responsible actors as possible involved in promoting, committing to and effectively implementing the Global Code for Ethics for Tourism and The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. Partnerships should be created to share good practises and common challenges. Together, we can work to ensure that the tourism industry does not have a negative impact on the environment and can benefit people and communities in a safe and positive way.

For more information, visit: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net), [www.thecode.org](http://www.thecode.org) or [www.unwto.org](http://www.unwto.org).