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TOURISM - RESOURCES - DEVELOPMENT
Proposed Programme of Activities

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Background

1. Tourism is a fast growing and significant economic activity in almost all CDCC member countries. Tourist arrivals in the island territories of the Caribbean comprised some six million in 1982 and gross tourism receipts were estimated at about US\$3.6 billion. Although in absolute numbers tourist arrivals and gross receipts are higher in the larger Caribbean countries, in relative terms tourism is more important in the smaller islands, whether measured in economic terms like the ratios of gross tourism receipts to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or to visible exports or measured in physical terms like the number of hotel rooms per square kilometer, tourist nights per 1,000 resident nights or any other commonly used yardstick.

2. In general tourism in the smaller economies of the region is based on a favourable climate and on the attraction of their coastal and marine resources along with other natural, cultural and human assets. These factors have resulted in a concentration of tourist facilities within a narrow zone from the highwater mark, and over the years the form of these tourist developments have gradually changed from exclusive resorts to encompass now also lower-cost facilities like cottages, apartments and condominiums, residential retirement homes and yachting-related construction works.

Tourism - Resource Use - Development

3. Given the high income elasticity of leisure and excluding unforeseen adverse global economic or national political events, it appears likely that tourism will continue to show high rates of growth. Consequently, tourism is seen by a number of countries as a major if not a most important stimulus to future economic growth. In addition, many of the smaller economies may have few alternatives which offer the same potential as tourism as regards its contribution to gross domestic product, balance of payments, government revenue and employment, all of which remain of continuing concern to most economies of the region.

4. The promotion of tourism as a significant element of a country's development strategy has sometimes been a controversial choice and its pros and cons have, at times, been subject to fierce debates. However, given the already important role of tourism, the question whether or not tourism has a positive or negative impact on the development process may be of less relevance to decision-makers in the public or private sector. A more pragmatic approach would be the establishment of criteria or ways and means which need to be incorporated in the development and management of the tourist sector such as to maximize a country's long term benefits, or alternatively to reduce its costs. From this perspective an analysis of positive or negative impacts is relevant if and when its conclusions can serve as an input in the establishment of such criteria.

5. By its very nature tourism can have profound economic, socio-cultural and environmental effects although there are no a priori reasons to indicate whether these effects will be positive or negative. A major criterion would then be related to the enhancement and sustained use of resources for long-term tourism development. Acceptance of such a criterion immediately leads to three further questions. The first one pertains to the choice between tourism and other potentially conflicting uses of environmental resources in order to maximize country benefits, the second one to the kind of tourism desired, while the latter pertains to the establishment of tourist activities in such a way that environmental resources are enhanced and accessible to nationals and tourist alike.

6. To a large extent tourism developments have been undertaken by the private sector in response to market demand and largely in the absence of policy guidelines and without the essential inputs of planning and environmental assessments, with governments responding in an ad hoc manner to developments and consequences. As a result short-term considerations appear to have had predominance over long-term ones. This has sometimes resulted in negative socio-cultural or environmental impacts since such effects extend beyond the time horizon of projected financial statements or, more often, extend beyond the confines of a tourism de-

velopment project and hence do not form part of a private sector evaluation. Such external effects, like pollution, beach erosion and social stress can take significant proportions and examples are all too easily visible all over the region. It is the role of government to evaluate such effects at the project level and their various structural linkages at the intermediate level and, as far as possible, to anticipate these at the macro level.

7. On the other hand avoidance of loss of tourism earnings or the potential of increased earnings are sometimes, and increasingly so, used in the justification of projects or developments which have benefits that extend beyond the tourism sector. Sewerage schemes, restoration of historic buildings and the establishment of national parks are cases in point.

Planning and Management

8. Incorporation of these factors calls for a greater commitment to planning and management of tourism development at the macro and micro level than is hitherto evidenced in the region. Major aspects of tourism development and management comprise the setting of objectives as regards the impact and type of tourism desired, the preparation of a strategy to achieve these objectives, planning of tourism activities preferably as a component part of a comprehensive plan or, otherwise, an an extensive sector plan, and at the micro level application of planning mechanisms and environmental impact assessments for larger projects or for those which require extensive habitat modification.

9. With respect to resource management the emphasis should be on avoiding potential resource management conflicts and on how these resources can be used to stimulate a country's development. Depending on the general level of development and the relative importance of the tourism sector this may result in some areas being earmarked for tourism and recreation, others for different uses, while for some absolute protection may be required.

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Mandate Sought

10. In view of the above observations the Committee may wish to support intensification of the Secretariat's activities in the field of a multi-disciplinary approach towards the nexus tourism - resources - environment - development. More specifically, such activities of the Secretariat would concentrate on:

(i) The development of methodologies to facilitate the choice between tourism and other potentially conflicting uses of natural resources. The emphasis of such methodologies would be on practical applicability and on their capabilities to evaluate qualitative and quantitative effects and criteria.

(ii) Planning and management of the tourist sector comprising the elements as outlined in paragraphs 8 and 9, and especially in view of the role of tourism development as part of a country's overall economic and social development policy and strategy.

Envisaged Work Programme

11. Pending the mandate no direct subjects have been programmed other than the activities arising from the joint UNEP/ECLAC project 'Tourism and Environment'. However, the following activities are envisaged:

(a) Technical Assistance

At the requests of Governments the Secretariat will participate in multidisciplinary planning missions for integrated tourism development.

(b) Training

The major thrust of training activities would be to strengthen the institutional capabilities of tourism planning at the project and macro level. This will be partly achieved as an outcome of the planning missions and partly by the holding of a workshop on various aspects of tourism planning and management.

(c) Planning Techniques

A major aim of this activity will be the development of an appropriate methodology as indicated in paragraph 10.

(d) Co-operation with other Caribbean and Extraregional Institutions

The Secretariat intends to strengthen its linkages with Governments and to collaborate to the extent possible with the private sector and regional institutions like CTCR and CCA, subregional institutions like CARICOM, OECS and CDB, as well as with the appropriate national institutions. Co-operation will be sought from extraregional organizations like OAS, WTO, UNEP and extraregional development banks and funding organizations. Emphasis will be on the sharing of expertise and on the most efficient use of resources.

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