WORLD TOURISM CONFERENCE
An Inter-governmental Tourism Landmark

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The World Tourism Conference was convened at Manila by the World Tourism Organization from 27 September to 10 October 1980. This Conference, open to all sovereign states of the United Nations, was attended by more than 500 persons, mostly delegates from over 100 countries. The Conference took place 17 years after the only previous intergovernmental tourism conference: the United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism (Rome 1963).

The reasons which led to the calling of this Conference had their roots in the need to re-think the role of tourism and to place it within a broader context, recognizing its social, economic, cultural, educational and political functions. In other words, it was found necessary for States to evaluate "the contribution of tourism to the improvement of the quality of life for Mankind, its human and social promotion, respect for its demands for cultural expansion, its physical and psychic health and its need for leisure and relaxation, without prejudice to its contribution to the economy" (WTO 1980).

In some tourism circles, the Manila Conference, similar to its predecessor (Rome Conference), is considered a landmark in the annals of tourism. It was the first time in the history of tourism that anything of this magnitude has taken place. While other international tourism conferences have addressed various functional aspects of tourism, this was the first time in which the highest level government agencies and policy makers had met in such a large force.

The Philippines' government carried out the arrangements and plans with superb detail and precision. Fleets of buses and literally hundreds of attendants made sure the convention operations went smoothly. The receptions, dinners, transportation, complimentary tours, travel assistance and overall hospitality demonstrated careful and well-planned organization by both the Secretariat of WTO and the host committee of the Philippines government. The Philippines International Convention Center (PICC) must be one of the largest, newest and finest in the world.

The pomp and grandeur of the Conference was impressive. The several receptions, dinners, and special entertainments were carried out in superb quality and excellent taste. Everyone was made to feel welcome and hospitality reigned supreme.
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organization. The basic membership includes 102 Full Members which represent the official governmental tourism agencies of sovereign states and two Associate Members (non-sovereign states). In addition, there are about 140 Affiliate Members which represent organizations related to tourism (such as the International Air Transport Association and the Organization of American States).

The WTO was created in 1975 to succeed the former International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO), first formed in 1925 (Jafari 1975). The headquarters of WTO is located in Madrid, Spain. The WTO differs from its predecessor primarily in its foundation and scope, being composed of the highest level government bodies within states and sanctioned by the United Nations. The WTO is actually the executive agency of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for all tourism related matters. As stated in their official documents, the purpose of WTO is "to promote and develop tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, to international understanding, to peace, prosperity and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion" (WTO 1980: 2).

The prime administrative unit is the General Assembly, which meets every two years. The Executive Council, meeting twice a year, consists of twenty members and implements decisions of the General Assembly. The Secretariat is the official organ, located in Madrid, and consists of the Secretary-General, Mr. Robert C. Lonati and his assistants. In addition, there are six Regional Commissions: Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. There are regional Secretariats at Lagos, Colombo, Lima, Manila, and Cairo.

The WTO has a staff of about 85 and performs a number of functions to foster better understandings of tourism. Its regular program of work each year includes three main objectives: (1) research—statistical data, market measures of selected
countries, development of facilities, physical planning, promotion, economic analysis;
operations--regional meetings with six Regional Commissions, technical meetings,
workshops, vocational training, technical cooperation; and (3) information and
publications--statistics, travel research journal, other reports.

WORLD TOURISM CONFERENCE

The planning and preparation for the World Tourism Conference (WTC) took some
three years. During this period, the following objectives were set to be achieved:
to clarify the true nature of tourism in its human, social, educational, cultural
and political context within the framework of contemporary national and international
societies; to define the role that tourism will be required to play in the relation-
ship between individuals and socio-professional groups within particular countries and
in international relations; to demonstrate the responsibility of States regarding
tourism beyond purely economic and commercial considerations (WTO 1980e).

The preparation for this Conference was carried through a series of consultations
and meetings which made it possible to obtain and assemble the opinions of member
States, and of non-members, as well as the ideas of hundreds of organizations and
individuals, whether affiliated with WTO or not, throughout the world. It was,
according to WTO, within this framework that the agenda of the WTC emerged, back-
ground documents prepared, and other supporting papers and preparatory schemes drawn
(WTO 1980m:1).

Agenda of the Conference

The working agenda of the Conference (as approved by the General Assembly of
WTO at its third session in Spain in 1979) was established as follows: 1) Opening
of the conference, 2) Election of the President, 3) Adoption of the Rules of
Procedure, 4) Adoption of the Agenda, 5) Election of Officers, 6) Establishment of
Committees, 7) Credentials of Participants: (a) Appointment of the Credentials

The Manila Conference format

The World Tourism Conference started its two week session on September 27. The impressive opening ceremonies included arrival of President and Madam Ferdinand F. Marcos, traditional opening speeches, and some cultural manifestations of the Philippines. President Marcos' speech took place as a part of the opening ceremony. The first lady and Mr. Jose Aspiras (the Philippines Minister of Tourism) gave their speeches later during the first week of the Conference. Actually, during this week, the Conference met in plenary session and was chiefly devoted to the reading of messages from Heads of States by their chief delegations at the Conference, the report of the Secretary-General of WTO and other inter-governmental agencies, as well as the message of Pope Paul, and the comments of delegations on the relevant conference documents. The most controversial issue at this stage was seating of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which finally did take place. These activities were carried on in plenary session with all delegates and affiliates participating (in all, there were five plenary sessions during the Conference).

The Conference then split into two commissions. Commission A, "political" was to deal with items 9-12 on the agenda. Concurrently, Commission B, "technical" was to consider items 13-16. All countries and organizations were represented in both because each had sent several delegates to this Conference.
Expression of Concerns and Resolutions

In both A and B committees, several concerns were aired, some were humanistic, many were political in nature, still several were economically bounded, and almost all were repeats of what had been said earlier or had appeared in tourism literature dated as early as the 1940s. Some of these concerns vanished as soon as they were pronounced (e.g., socio-economic costs of tourism), but many were captured instantaneously and conjectured in many ways throughout the Conference (e.g., economic prospects/foreign exchange capacity of tourism).

Some of the concerns which found their way into the WTC documents are as follows (BITS 1980; Centre d'Etudes du Tourisme 1980; Czechoslovak Socialist Republic 1980; Egyptian Ministry of Tourism 1980; IATA and AIT 1980; Republic of the Philippines 1980a and b; WTO 1980a-1980m).

. That tourism is linked to the social and economic development of nations;
. That tourism is man's access to rest and holidays as well as for freedom of movement;
. That tourism has moved from a restricted elite activity to a wider activity integrated into the social and economic life of the peoples of the world;
. That a natural corollary of the right to work is the right to leisure and travel;
. That a country should provide all its citizens with the best conditions for adequate and non-discriminatory access to leisure activities;
. That the effects of tourism on the physical and mental health of individuals should be studied;
. That tourism must be considered in all its aspects and components;
. That the significance of tourism in national economies and in international trade are emphasized;
.That domestic tourism contributes to an improved equilibrium of the national economy;

. That domestic tourism is made available to the citizen to get to know his own socio-cultural and physical settings;

. That social tourism should be made available to citizens, making vacation feasible for those citizens who can not normally afford it;

. That tourism is made available to the youth and the elderly;

. That tourism is a source of new employment and a positive element for social development;

. That tourism is treated as a positive and ever-present factor in promoting mutual knowledge and understanding and as a basis for teaching a greater level of respect and confidence among all the peoples of the world;

. That tourism plays a significant role in furthering equilibrium, cooperation and solidarity among all countries;

. That tourism resources are non-renewable;

. That States must preserve the distinctiveness of each culture;

. That the spiritual and moral elements of tourism should be emphasized;

. That the practice of tourism must not mean destroying and jeopardizing the material, moral and spiritual heritage of the tourist destinations;

. That the artistic and cultural heritages of countries are highlighted;

. That tourists respect the identity and dignity of the destination visited;

. That citizens are trained for their civic responsibilities to receive tourists and that the development of human resources is necessary for improving the quality of all tourist undertakings;

. That tourism supply within a country is not a separate entity but it is linked to all other sectors of national life;

. That tourism development can make a positive contribution to the life of the nation, provided the supply is well planned;
That freedom of movement is indispensable for the harmonious development of tourism;

Based on these concerns, committees A and B also offered several recommendations for the consideration of the Conference:

- That international cooperation in the field of tourism is necessary;
- That bilateral and multilateral technical and financial cooperation should take place;
- That States will have to give more increased attention to the development of national and international tourist activity;
- That States bring tourism in harmony with other basic needs of society;
- That authenticity of the tourist image is the responsibility of States;
- That States need to be aware of the energy needs of the industry;
- That tourism planning policy must be evolved at several levels within the context of national policy;
- That the development of supply calls for a greater effort of understanding, co-operation and co-ordination between the public sector and the private and operational sectors;
- That consultation and exchanges of views take place between developing and industrialized countries;
- That the technological co-operation between governments in the developed and developing countries should be intensified;
- That a greater standardization of the characteristics of tourism supply is needed;
- That States and operators should take measures designed to stagger holidays and promote national tourism;
- That the best conditions be secured to ensure the success of small and medium sized enterprises;
- That States should do away with visa requirements;
That new forms of tourism supply geared to the requirements of future national and international demands should be studied;

That transfer of technology to the developing countries should be carefully planned and adapted to local circumstances;

That States conduct a study on the lack of teaching staff in tourism;

That WTO should establish a worldwide tourist information system;

That the role of WTO as the UN Development Program's executing agency be enhanced;

That WTO should work towards establishing a tourist code and tourism bill of rights.

OBSERVATIONS

Although the WTO will be making official statements in the future regarding the outcome of this conference, the author's have prepared the following comments on their impressions of the conference.

Even though committees A and B met separately, they arrived at similar conclusions. This endorses the quality of work preparatory to the conference and the fact that tourism does have some common fundamentals no matter how differently approached.

In spite of the fact that the course of the conference was directed toward the social and political sides, many delegates kept coming back to economic issues and especially how they could improve their nation's tourism economics.

The format of the conference was directed toward the goal of ratifying the basic premises as stated in the previously circulated documents. Therefore, one could not expect a great amount of open discussion on the pertinent several topics. Perhaps the several comments of the delegates as presented from the floor will in the future be incorporated in published reports.

There appeared to be great disparity between the several delegates regarding their levels of understanding of the complicated nature of tourism. It seemed that the representatives of the Affiliate members had a greater grasp
of tourism than the political delegates of nations. Perhaps this stems from their many years of actual practice of tourism development and management.

There was a tendency for the conference to be overbalanced toward the undeveloped and developing countries. At one point, it seemed that opinions were being polarized along these lines. It would appear that WTO, as the only major worldwide tourism organization of its kind, would best reach worldwide goals if such polarization could be avoided.

It was seen the opinion of WTO itself that the Manila Conference "will not change tourism structures in the world from one day to the next." It will, however, WTO suggests, "in an irreversible and an irresistible fashion, provide guidelines for conduct in the future." These guidelines will, over the years, make it possible for all tourism institutions, according to WTO, "to formulate and coordinate common policies which will permit tourism to play the role that it really should play: that is, to promote peace, tolerance, and understanding among men and for the benefit of all mankind" (WTO 1980f:1).

These expectations may be examined in the light of the actual outcome of the Rome Conference which was also the biggest gathering of its kind in annals of tourism in our opinion, in 1963. However, the aspirations coming from the Manila Conference have better chances to materialize today. WTO is a well established inter-governmental tourism agency in the world and with that come, among other things, certain prestige, philosophy political and economic support, and possibilities for implementation of tourism measures. This stature and the position of tourism could be further advanced internationally, if the work and cooperation between WTO and the leading research and educational institutions could be coordinated. During recent years, the latter has made tremendous contribution to the field of tourism. It should remain the responsibility of WTO to open avenues of communication with these institutions and incorporate their resources and findings in its work. Tourism as a whole stands to benefit from this network of communication and cooperation.

In order to assess the recommendations and resolutions of the Manila Conference, it has been agreed that a World Tourism Meeting should be held in 1982. Upon the invitation of the government of Mexico, the meeting will take place in Mexico City.
BITS

Centre d'Etudes du Tourisme

Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

Egyptian Ministry of Tourism

IATA and AIT

Jafari, Jafar

Republic of the Philippines

WTO (World Tourism Organization)
1980h The Individual at the Center of His Own Holiday (Provisional Agenda Item 12). CMT/DB/12, 15 May 1980, 29 pp. Madrid: WTO.

Note: The above reference list represents (with the exception of Jafari 1975) only a limited number of documents produced for or at the World Tourism Conference. For a complete list of documents and any other information write the World Tourism Organization (59 Avda. del Generalismo, Madrid -16, Spain).