

E-Tourism Initiative: strategy in action
Tuesday 12 September 2006
Outcomes

The delegations who attended the meeting were unanimous in thanking UNCTAD for organising this seminar. They all wanted to put emphasis on the potential of tourism as one of the most promising sectors for developing economies.

Many developing countries have been negatively affected by the consequences of globalisation processes. The importance of traditional key export sectors is decreasing and their role as crucial development tools is not so relevant now. In most of these countries, the tourism sector can offer genuine, measurable and expanding opportunities and represent a major source of employment, income and foreign exchange earnings. For the delegates, tourism is a governmental priority and had been officially recognized as such.

The low technological basis in many developing countries is a real challenge in the way to develop an ICT-driven development strategy in the tourism sector. The delegates pointed out the lack of equipment in their countries. Despite such a barrier, implementing an e-tourism strategy could be of a major benefit for various reasons:

- Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are a key driver for developing countries to organize and market their tourism offer in order to gain more autonomy in their search for business. There is a consensus that policies and e-business strategies should be devised to ensure their access to international tourism markets.
- ICTs are instrumental for the integration of tourism businesses at the local level into tourism distribution networks, providing appropriate strategies, competences and cooperation mechanisms are developed and implemented by all stakeholders.
- Some delegates enhanced the possibility for their countries to "live more on tourism". Some countries are already on the way to adopt relevant Plans of Actions for capacity building in the tourism sector through ICT tools. Awareness is rising about the strong positive externalities of the use of ICTs in tourism - support to economic diversification, international promotion - and many developing countries are willing to implement such a strategy.

The E-Tourism Initiative - within the scope of the guest speakers' interventions - aroused the delegates' interest as it seems to fit with the development strategies in the tourism sector of most developing countries.