OEA/Ser.W

CIDI/INF. 559/23

12 July 2023

Original: English

CONCEPT NOTE

Regular meeting of

Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI)

JULY 25, 2023

**THEME: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AS A DEVELOPMENT MODEL**

1. **Background/Justification**

The theme for the regular meeting of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) of the Organization of American States (OAS) scheduled for July 25, 2023 is “Sustainable Tourism as a Development Model” and this theme invites the obvious question - Is Sustainable Tourism an appropriate model for countries, regions or communities to follow to achieve or enhance development in their respective circumstances?

There is already considerable evidence from countries among the OAS membership, particularly those in the Caribbean where tourism has been the principal driver of economic activity, employment and foreign exchange earnings.

Notions of development however require considerations beyond improvement in economic circumstances, to include social, and environmental sustainability, levels of education and literacy, as well as access to healthcare and basic services.

Moreover, many experts view development as a multi-dimensional process involving factors such as income distribution, poverty reduction, gender equality, and human rights, to assess the overall level of development in a country, region or community. In this context, assessing the effectiveness of sustainable tourism as a development model requires a judgement of the potential of tourism to contribute to a broad range of multi-dimensional objectives.

Tourism has been increasingly recognized as a tool for development in several countries around the world including many in the Americas. The sector has played an important role in boosting economic growth, creating employment opportunities, promoting cultural exchange, and cultural heritage and building critical infrastructure. For many years tourism has transformed itself into a powerful and dynamic engine of economic activity with a vast value chain related to key sectors such as agriculture, entertainment, transportation and cultural heritage, among others. Moreover, the sector’s growth, in countries that have championed its development has enabled the provision of new opportunities for small enterprises, indigenous communities, vulnerable groups, earning valuable foreign exchange, while contributing to poverty reduction efforts, and enhancing livelihoods.

Prior to the pandemic, Travel and Tourism (including its direct, indirect, and induced impacts) accounted for 10.3% of all jobs (334 million) and 10.4% of global GDP (US$ 10 trillion) in 2019, with international visitor spending amounting to US$ 1.9 trillion in 2019. By 2022, Travel and Tourism contributed 7.6% to global GDP - 23% below 2019 levels, and 22 million new jobs, 11.4% below 2019 levels, while international visitor spending was still 40.4% less than in 2019[[1]](#footnote-1)/.

The tourism sector in member states has also been susceptible to natural disasters including hurricanes, flooding storms, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, and must increasingly contend with challenges associated with climate change. In seeking to rebuild tourism in the region post COVID-19, there appears to be an emerging consensus that the tourism which emerges must better embrace notions of resilience in new and existing development, account for impacts of climate change and accrue net gains to the sector’s many stakeholders.

As one of the most resilient sectors, tourism, with the ability to recover relatively quickly after a shock, has the potential to contribute not only to the overall post-COVID economic recovery but to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in our countries.

Tourism has the potential to contribute directly or indirectly to all of the SDGs. With its promising recovery tourism is well-positioned to continue fostering economic growth and creating jobs to meet Goal #1 “End poverty in all its forms everywhere.” Tourism has been included as a specific target in Goals #8, #12 and #14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources. In addition, tourism can help to promote the conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial resources, as well as promote awareness of conservation issues related to land ecosystems in support of Goal #16, and promote partnerships between governments, the private sector, and local communities to promote sustainable tourism practices in relation to Goal #17.

Notwithstanding the sector’s ability to contribute to member states’ development objectives, it is important to note that tourism can also have negative impacts on the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage if not managed sustainably. Therefore, it is important for tourism stakeholders to take a responsible and sustainable approach to the sector’s development and management, and to ensure that accrued benefits are equitably distributed. In this context, in championing tourism as a development model, the sector must embrace a holistic approach that builds on notions of sustainability by creating a positive impact on the environment, biodiversity, society, SMEs, and local communities.

1. **Purpose of the meeting**

Many government leaders and policymakers, but not all, in our region understand the importance and potential of tourism as an agent of development. The purpose of the meeting therefore is to discuss the effectiveness and efficacy of tourism as an agent of development for the countries in our region, to share good practices in the area of sustainable tourism, as well as to raise awareness of the impact it can have on development. The meeting will provide member states with an opportunity to present their experiences in the framework of tourism as a development model, highlighting examples of using tourism as the main engine of development in countries, regions or communities. The meeting will also address issues related to the challenges and solutions for strengthening the sector’s resilience and the ability to not only contribute to development but to manage and mitigate the negative impact tourism can have on the environment, culture, and local communities.

Questions for member states will feature:

1. How important is tourism as a tool or model for development in OAS member states?
2. Tourism can have negative environmental and social impacts, particularly if it is not managed sustainably; how have member states minimized these negative impacts while promoting responsible tourism practices that respect the environment and local communities?
3. How can the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) of the OAS collaborate with member states to build capacity to promote tourism as an agent of development in their jurisdictions?
4. What are the key strategies and tools for promoting sustainable tourism in member states?
5. Based on your country’s experience how is tourism contributing to the attainment of the SDGs?
6. **Relevance to SEDI**

* Promote tourism as a tool for increasing economic growth, creating employment opportunities, contribute to poverty reduction and enhancing livelihoods
* Strengthen the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
* Promote dialogue, on the reconstruction and rebuilding of tourism post COVID-19
* Foster regional dialogue, cooperation and knowledge sharing on sustainable tourism, including mechanisms for sharing good practices and lessons learned

1. **OAS mandates**

The 2021 OAS General Assembly resolution “AG/RES. 2967 (LI-O/21) Advancing Hemispheric Initiatives on Integral Development: Promoting Resilience, **and** under the strategic line “promoting inclusive and competitive economies” establishes the following mandate:

13. “To request SEDI to support the initiatives for the reconstruction and reactivation of tourism agreed to in the Declaration of Paraguay ([CIDI/TUR-XXV/DEC. 1/21](http://scm.oas.org/IDMS/Redirectpage.aspx?class=III.26.1%20CIDI/TUR-XXV/DEC&classNum=1&lang=e)), as adopted on October 6, 2021, within the framework of the Twenty-fifth Inter-American Congress of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Tourism.” and mandate

14, “To instruct SEDI, in its capacity as Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Tourism (CITUR), in keeping with the provisions of the Lima Declaration ([CIDI/TUR-XXIII/DEC. 1/15 rev. 1](http://scm.oas.org/IDMS/Redirectpage.aspx?class=III.24.1%20CIDI/TUR-XXIII/DEC.&classNum=1&lang=e)), the Georgetown Declaration ([CIDI/TUR-XXIV/DEC. 1/18](http://scm.oas.org/IDMS/Redirectpage.aspx?class=III.25.1%20CIDI/TUR-XXIV/Dec&classNum=1&lang=e)), the CITUR work plan and the decision of the second special meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Tourism held on August 14, 2020 ([CIDI/CITUR/RE/doc.6/20](http://scm.oas.org/IDMS/Redirectpage.aspx?class=XIII.8.2%20E.CIDI/CITUR/RE/DOC&classNum=6&lang=e)) to establish four specialized working groups to continue to support the efforts of member states, within the framework of CITUR, to **strengthen the sustainable recovery of the tourism sector** as a consequence of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to urge member states to support the efforts of the CITUR working groups in this process.”

The Declaration of Paraguay “Toward the Reconstruction and Rebuilding of Tourism Post COVID-19” recognized “the importance of continuing to work to build consensus for coordinating actions among countries in order to build resilience in the tourism sector and restore confidence among travelers so that tourism recovery in the Americas may be robust and sustained.”

The OAS Charter mandates CIDI to promote cooperation among OAS member states to achieve integral development and, in particular, to help eliminate extreme poverty. The Charter also directs CIDI to “promote, coordinate and assign responsibility for the execution of development programs and projects to the subsidiary bodies and relevant organizations, on the basis of the priorities identified by the member states, in areas such as economic and social development, including trade, tourism, integration and the environment.”

**Structure of the meeting**

For the purposes of the meeting, various speakers will be invited to explore the role of sustainable tourism in development as well as its potential to contribute significantly to the overall post COVID-19 economic recovery and the attainment of the SDGs in our countries. Member states will have an opportunity to take part in an interactive dialogue guided by the Chair of CIDI.

After a question-and-answer session with the guest speakers, the Chair will invite delegations to share their practices on sustainable tourism,and explore opportunities for cooperation in this area.

Invited Panelists -TBD

1. **Outcomes of the meeting**
2. Better understanding of the role of sustainable tourism in development in OAS member states.
3. Specific challenges faced and solutions identified by member states in promoting sustainable tourism as a tool for development shared.
4. Opportunities for cooperation on sustainable tourism identified.
5. Contribute to the dialogue and support member states’ efforts to reach attainment of the SDGs.

CIDRP03931E01

1. . See World Travel and Tourism Council Economic Impact Reports available at <https://wttc.org/research/economic-impact> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)