



Press Release: Meeting the Biggest Issues of our Time – the Call to Tourism Stakeholders

London 2012 Olympic Peace Campaign to be part of the 5th IIPT Conference in Africa next month

Gordon Sillence, Executive Director of the UN Type II DestiNet Partnership and Vice President of the Ecotrans Network for Sustainable Tourism Development provides readers with the a unique insight into the near future of the year 2012, and what opportunities we can take to realize sustainable development in our duty to meet the Millennium Goals.

In one month's time I will be making a presentation at the IIPT Conference in Africa. The theme of the conference is climate change, and as the organizer of both the *London 2012 Olympic Peace Campaign* and advisor to the ETC and UN-WTO on Climate Change in the run up to the Copenhagen COP 15 talks, my interest is high. What can this conference achieve for the people and the continent of Africa? Those people that by the nature of relative and absolute poverty are most vulnerable to the impacts of global changes, including climate change.

My simple message will be to link the issue of climate change to peace – 'In a period of climate change, one can expect an increase in extreme weather events that impact on environment and communities. In the aftermath, the next issue is one of security, when the need for peace and order is paramount. Consequently a sustainable future should build in the fundamental mechanisms for human populations to create the conditions of peace for themselves in the breakdown and then restoration of law and order as we pass through the trials of multiple crises that include extreme weather events, political and fiscal instability, food production and distribution breakdown, loss of biodiversity, etc

A world with an estimated 40 major conflict zones is a world where there are not only 40 more human tragedy stories, but also 40 less tourism destinations. Any Middle East country tourism stakeholder will tell you at the moment the essential need for peace for tourism business to exist and then prosper.

What is also in evidence though is the idea to use tourism as the economic rationale and driver for global peace, with tourism stakeholders playing a key instrumental role in promoting a globally aware culture that is sensitive to the needs and plights as well as the differences and diversity of global cultures.

To marvel at and appreciate the global environment and cultural diversity, as well as to provide business for local communities, to support and network rich and poor regions, to provide funds for nature and cultural conservation, to share knowledge and awareness of the best of what is local to a global audience – tourism can do all of this.

What our opportunity is now is that in 2012 there is a convergence of the Rio 20+ Conference in June in Brazil and the London 2012 Olympic Games in the UK during August, just two months later. In preparing for these events, we can act as an international group of responsible stakeholders whose common

interest is to showcase alongside each participating country's Olympic athletes, the best nature and culture offers that are outstanding examples of sustainable and responsible tourism development, and the best ways of accessing them through the travel and hospitality industries.

We can create a mosaic of open travel and tourism destinations and routes that link to London from all over the world. The Olympic athletes will leave these destinations and pass on these routes, and their safe passage in preparation, travelling to and returning from the Games should also be every citizens' global right to travel in peace anywhere on the globe at that time. In this way a map of international destinations will highlight all the countries who work to achieve the right of peaceful passage for the 16 days, and respect a global truce. And this map will be an international map of tourism that can immediately be used by the industry to provide income to those countries who are counting on tourism to develop their economies. Such a map of peaceful national tourism can be prepared for Rio 20+ and then broadcast via the Olympic media machinery.

This all needs a degree of co-ordination that only now is possible in global culture, in the form of the internet's ability to connect us all. If the aim is to truly realize 16 days of global peace during the Olympic competition period, then we need to start organizing now, and follow the London Olympic countdown clock, which started in March 2011 at 500 days to go... A full campaign info page is available on <http://destinet.eu/topics/sustainable-consumption-and-production/peace-through-tourism>. It shows how we can implement a top down and bottom up process to end the worst climate change that is really happening in our lifetime – that change to a climate of fear, so negative for tourists and host communities alike. Starting in Africa ...

For further information or to take part in the campaign please see the Web page material and then contact Gordon Sillence

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