

*IUCN World Conservation Congress
Barcelona, 5 – 14 October 2008*

*Aliances Workshop # 898 – 8 October 2008
Towards biodiversity-friendly hotels
Organized by ACCOR Group*

Background

Tourism demand is increasingly driven to areas of high natural value, from protected areas, to pristine beaches and coastlines. The tourism industry, and in particular the hotel sector, is a main beneficiary of this important service that nature provides. Despite this positive link, there are unfortunately many instances where hotels have not taken the appropriate measures to avoid or at least minimise their impacts on the host environment, thus destroying one of their main assets.

It is in the interest of the hotel sector for good practices to be integrated in all the steps of a hotel's life cycle, from siting, to design and finally to operations. This session focused on how this can be done and how different stakeholders can help achieve this. The workshop also introduced a joint project by IUCN and Accor that developed a guide focusing on hotel operations: **Biodiversity: My hotel in action**.

Objectives of the Workshop

1. Present to the audience the tourism industry and its increasing commitment to sustainable development as well as the challenges linked to the structure of the sector (most actors are small companies) which calls for the support/partnership with public authorities and NGOs;
2. Encourage the participants to create partnerships with hotels and to use the guide as a common tool to identify relevant actions to protect biodiversity;
3. To receive advice on dissemination activities for the guide implementation opportunities.

The Workshop

During this session some of the guidelines that have been developed to support the hotel sector in integrating biodiversity conservation in the different stages of the hotel lifecycle were presented. The presentations also highlighted some of the obstacles for an effective integration of biodiversity in the hotel sector. In addition, this workshop served as an introduction to the recently published guide **Biodiversity: My hotel in action – A guide to sustainable use of biological resources**.

The workshop, opened by Giulia Carbone, from the IUCN Business and Biodiversity Programme, included four presentations:

1. **Why hotels can play a role in protecting biodiversity. H  l  ne Souan, French Ministry for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Planning and Development.** This presentation described the French Government's rationale for taking part in this

project. Hotels are considered key players in biodiversity conservation due to their dependence on Natural Resources and their ability to change tourist perceptions.

2. **Biodiversity: My hotel in action – a presentation of the guide. Richard Tapper, Environment Business and Development Group.** As one of the experts who drafted the guide, Richard described the collaborative process that led to its creation and gave a sneak preview of what areas are covered by the manual.
3. **Examples of hotel actions and commitments. Patricia Cortijo, Accor Hotels.** By associating with the current partners, Accor wanted to make the term “biodiversity” more accessible to staff and clients. As one of the key partners of the project, Accor contributed with on the ground experiences of how hotels can act to protect biodiversity.
4. **Working in partnership for biodiversity. Tensie Whelan, Rainforest Alliance.** This presentation focused on how an NGO like Rainforest Alliance can help with the implementation of this guide. Several options for this were offered, including, training, avoided deforestation certification, certification in general and by creating an eco-index of sustainable options.

In the second part of the workshop, Frits Hesselink, member of IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC), facilitated a discussion between the participants that focused on the roles that different groups could play in ensuring an effective dissemination of the hotel guide. The discussion also looked at the elements necessary for successful partnerships between the hotel sector and conservation organisations to implement a biodiversity protection strategy.

Facilitated discussion and key recommendations by the participants

1. How can hotels act to protect biodiversity?

Hotel siting & construction

- Follow best practice in siting, construction, refurbishment, renovation and operation
- Take biodiversity into account when choosing the building location and plant somewhere else to balance the impact that the hotel has on the environment
- Use environmentally-friendly building materials & renewable heating

Strategy

- Ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability
- Pay green taxes
- Obtain a green certificate for the building itself
- Obtain commitment from hotels in natural areas (if a chain)
- Congruency between action and speech
- 4 C's: Commitment, congruence, communication, creativity
- Provide eco-friendly services – starting with customer needs

Communication

- Communicate its commitment to the clients
- Use the influence of the hotel to change customer behaviour pattern

- Raise awareness/educate guests, host communities and staff and make them engage
- Show the talk – in a fashionable way – make people experience it rather than boring them in a preaching way
- Raise the issues with local/national hotel and business associations, and invite them to distribute the guide

Destination management

- Be involved in destination management issues – this could be a commitment to actions by ACCOR similar to that carried out by the Tour Operators’ Initiative in Turkey
- Actively engage public authorities to highlight the importance of effective planning and enforcement for biodiversity conservation and environmental protection

Management of environmental and social issues

- Identify hotel impacts on the environment (including indirect impacts such as energy, water consumption and social issues) and set up goals to mitigate these impacts
- Waste management: re-use or recycle own waste
- Follow the guide “Biodiversity: My hotel in action”
- Walk the talk – green procurement
- Employ local people

2. How can NGOs and public authorities help

General (both)

Communication

- Raise awareness
- Provide knowledge of local issues/information
- Stress to entrepreneurs that protecting biodiversity is good business – landscape, species and cultural diversity are the basis for a first rate tourism product
- Provide access to available scientific information on biodiversity in a user-friendly format

Support hotels to take actions

- Give support (technical/financial)
- Giving advice to hotels in the areas of biodiversity conservation
- Guidelines and guidance for building, waste management, etc...

Coordination

- Create a committee with members of local NGOs & authorities to provide support and advice of biodiversity-friendly operations

Incentives

- Name and fame

Destination management

- Participate in spatial planning in destination including conservation managers

NGO

Support hotels to take action – Communication and Training

- Provide technical support
- Training hotels
- Training of guides
- Organise educational round tables about tourism and biodiversity in general and the hotel sector in particular
- Support communication

Advocacy & lobbying

- Use potential to influence (political pressure)
- Put pressure for implementation

Monitor and evaluate progress

- Formulate monitoring programme and carry out monitoring (use expert advice) – to bring credibility to the action
- Evaluation

Project support

- Support compensation of global (CO2 offset) and local impacts (local projects)

Local Authorities

Promote implementation

- Provide enabling policies /incentives for biodiversity-friendly practices
- Motivate implementation
- Proactively encourage government for biodiversity friendly policies in the hotel and tourism industry
- Provide funding for training

Destination management – land use planning

- Make good land use policy
- Stress and enforce use of land classifications

3. What are the next steps to disseminating this guide?

Implementation by Accor

- Practice what you preach
- Fortify guide within ACCOR by creating an intranet to share experiences and create an ACCOR community

Incentives

- Create incentives (leverage the supply chain)
- Produce an IUCN white list of hotels that adopted the guide

Communication

- Promotion by hotels, NGOs & governments (make it a standard?)
- Distribute/communicate guide at tourism fairs (WTM, ITB) and encourage other companies to do the same
- Outreach to national hotel associations – e.g. use IUCN members in different countries to distribute the guide to hotel associations and inform them of how to use it
- Send the guide to NGOs and green institutions
- Send the guide to tourist agents and other hotel chains
- Distribute to hotels via Tour Operators
- Couple distribution to hotel associations and tour operators training and awareness and regional guides.
- Use powerpoint/video in local language with local examples to increase awareness.
- Translate the guide into different languages
- Develop a wiki so that this can become a live document
- Make a 1 minute Youtube film to promote the guide and then send the link to contact list
- Write an article about the guide and place it inside in-flight magazines and other travel publications
- Market why this is important in a simple way

Coordination

- Link the work that NGOs public authorities are doing in order to apply this manual
- Collaboration between NGOs/Hotels/Gov/Tour Operators for learning/capacity building
- Create a platform for different actors to discuss

Hotel management

- Look for biodiversity champions within hotels
- Transform the guide into actions

Monitor and evaluate progress

- Monitor implementation – e.g. undertake a survey to detect change in compliance after a defined period of time
- Set up an evaluating body based on indicators and publish results

Support hotels to take action - Training

- Support by IUCN/Accor (technical)
- Integrate guide into hotel training materials and induction
- Institute training and skills enhancement in hotel management and staff
- Find local trainers/partners
- Develop a self assessment tool to see how hotels score, where the hotel wants to go, etc...