



San José Declaration on Rural Community-based Tourism

We, the representatives of the indigenous people and rural communities of Latin America gathered in San Jose, hereby ratify the principles and recommendations of "*Otavalo Declaration on sustainable and competitive community-based tourism with cultural identity*" (September 2001) by which we encourage national and local governments, private enterprises, NGOs and international cooperation agencies to promote, support and ensure the exercise of community-based tourism. Although we recognize that some progress has been made in the past years, we believe that it is still necessary to enhance national tourism policies and strategies, to strengthen our own organization and improve the management of services we provide to tourists.

The communities of Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru, invited by the ILO for consultation, assert that we have set out our goal to position community-based tourism as one of the strategic components of local, national and regional development. Convinced that this form of tourism contributes to income and employment generation in our countries and can enhance the well-being of our communities, we declare that:

1. Our vision of tourism development is based on values such as solidarity, cooperation and respect for life, preservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and of their biological diversity. Therefore, we are against any type of tourism development in our lands which could become a burden for our people, our culture and the environment.
2. Our aim is that to help our communities achieve prosperity and decent livelihood, with improved living and working conditions. Tourism can contribute to making this goal a reality provided that we make it an activity which is socially oriented, environmentally responsible, culturally enriching and economically viable. To this end, we request an equitable sharing of the benefits generated by tourism among all those who participate in its development.
3. We are aware that tourism can be a source of opportunities, as well as a threat to the social cohesion of our communities, their culture and natural habitat. We are thus encouraging self-management of tourism so that our communities can assume the leadership in its planning, operation, monitoring and development.
4. Tourism should adequately complement the economy of the whole community and of individual households, stimulating the development of agriculture, fishing, handicrafts, small-scale agro industries, transport and other services. In this respect, we want to explore all sustainable initiatives which contribute to local economic development and generate new employment and decent work in our communities.
5. We want our culture and its various forms of expression to remain alive and authentic and to progress through the intercultural exchanges that we encourage. We hope that dialogue between the various cultures contributes to a better understanding between peoples and helps build a universal culture of peace.
6. In our community meetings, we have designed Codes of Ethics with a view to regulating the behaviour of tourists and their relationships with the community. The present consultative meeting enabled us to appreciate their relevance in safeguarding the invaluable natural, cultural and social resources of our heritage. Their practical use has been translated into quality tourism experiences for visitors and in the well-being of the host communities. Consequently, we invite tour operators and solidarity travellers to recognize, disseminate and respect these codes with a view to implementing harmonious intercultural

cohabitation. The Global Code of Ethics of the World Tourism Organization must also inspire these behaviours.

7. We reaffirm the right to own and control our land and territories – source of subsistence, identity and spirituality – as set out in ILO Convention N° 169, ratified by all countries participating in this consultation. When starting any type of economic activity, in particular tourism, a policy of sustainable planning and management of natural resources should be adopted. We want to be cautious whenever new infrastructure needs to be constructed or improved. We refuse to sell or let our land to persons who are not from our communities. We disapprove any decision which would contravene this principle.
8. We reaffirm our right to prior consultation and informed participation in decision-making in the planning, implementation and assessment of policies and programmes, in particular those concerning environmental, cultural, economic or tourism issues, to the extent these decisions directly affect our lives, institutions or spiritual well-being. Consultation should take place through our representative organizations, with due respect to established authorities and appropriate procedures.
9. We encourage the participation of multidisciplinary teams in community-based planning and in the management and operation of tourist services by the community, as well as in carrying out studies to evaluate the impact of tourism on the life of our communities.
10. We invite national and international cooperation institutions as well as public and private organizations favourable to community-based tourism to join efforts to strengthen our network **REDTURS in Latin America**, initiated with support from the ILO. We agreed that its mission is to strengthen and develop local, national and regional networks of rural community-based tourism, by providing them with services for the sustainable development of our small-scale enterprises, through:
 - a) the design of a conceptual and strategic framework on community-based tourism with a view to incorporating it in the policies and agendas of public and private sectors in our countries;
 - b) the creation and operation of a Regional Technical Secretariat which will help to secure international support and cooperation to undertake priority tasks, namely:
 - consolidating local, national and regional community-based tourism networks;
 - producing, collecting and disseminating information relevant to tourism;
 - developing the exchange of experiences between communities; and
 - supporting the promotion and marketing of community-based tourist destinations on the European market through participation in exhibitions and fairs, and the launching of the REDTURS brand.
 - c) the establishment of strategic cooperation and support alliances with other networks and international agencies such as CONPEHT, WTO, UNDP, FAO-FIDA, UNESCO and IICA, among others;
 - d) supporting the creation of a technical unit within the institution responsible for the national tourism policy in each country; such a unit should have the capacity to promote and strengthen local and national community-based tourism networks;
 - e) the implementation of the conclusions and the follow-up to the recommendations of the present consultative meeting.

Done in San José de Costa Rica, on the 28th of October 2003