



ACCREDITING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CERTIFICATION – AFRICA

**Consultative Workshop on Accreditation of Sustainable
Tourism Certification to Support the Establishment of
the Tourism Sustainability Council (TSC)**

Meeting Report

18, 19, 20 January 2010

Mercure Hotel Bedfordview, Johannesburg, South Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “Accrediting Sustainable Tourism – Africa” meeting took place from 18-20 January 2010 in Johannesburg, South Africa and was attended by 28 individuals. Attendance included representatives of 9 African sustainable tourism certification programmes based in Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Morocco and South Africa. Also in attendance were two representatives from developing sustainable tourism certification programmes in Mauritius and Madagascar, as well as representatives from the Institute for Tourism (Mozambique), the National Department of Tourism (South Africa), the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa.

The meeting was made possible by funding from UNEP, the UN Foundation and the Southern African Trust (SAT) and was facilitated by the Secretariat of the Sustainable Tourism Network of Southern Africa (STNSA).

The results achieved were:

- 9 sustainable tourism certification programmes provided input on the Tourism Sustainability Council’s (TSC) proposed accreditation programme and the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC).
- The TSC acquired an improved understanding of the context of sustainable tourism in Africa, the role of certification programmes and the potential impacts of the TSC’s proposed accreditation standards.
- Sustainable tourism certification stakeholders from 9 African countries shared knowledge and information with each other and with TSC representatives through workshop proceedings and formal and informal networking.

Presentations

Experts made a number of presentations about sustainable tourism in Africa, the TSC, the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), certification and accreditation procedures, standard setting and market access for sustainable tourism initiatives. The full list of presentations made during the workshop is as follows:

- Presentation One, *Tourism Sustainability in Africa* (Ms Jennifer Seif and Dr Anna Spenceley)
- Presentation Two, *Tourism Sustainability Council: fostering the increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principals* (Ms. Catalina Etcheverry)
- Presentation Three, *Accreditation and certification what is the process?* (Dr. Richard Denman)

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- Presentation Four, *Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and standard setting* (Dr Richard Denman and Dr Anna Spenceley)
- Presentation Five, *Certification procedures – requirements of programmes* (Dr Richard Denman)
- Presentation Six, *Tourism Sustainability Council: Market Access* (Ms Catalina Etcheverry)

In summary, delegates expressed support for the TSC accreditation system, although a number of questions were also raised:

- Many certification organisations are concerned that compliance with an international accreditation programme could potentially undermine the authority of strong national accreditation processes of countries such as South Africa and Brazil.
- Although the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), on which the TSC accreditation standards will in part be based, are internationally recognised standards, the GSTC need to be further clarified and would also have to be flexible to fit the African context.
- Accreditation fees should be affordable and announced far in advance to enable certification organisations to build these fees into annual budgets and fee structures.
- The possibilities that the TSC will in future offer membership directly to the tourism private sector (and/or other services like benchmarking) could inadvertently undermine local certification programmes.

In addition to enabling African stakeholders to engage with the TSC, the meeting also enabled African certification organisations to network and exchange information with each other, which is essential for a more integrated approach to sustainable tourism on the continent.

STNSA has helped to foster good working relationships between African certification organisations over the last few years and the network will continue to serve as a focal point for further consultation with the TSC as with other sustainable tourism processes and initiatives.

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DAY ONE

Programme Director for the Day – Lisa Scriven (FTTSA)

1. IN ATTENDANCE

16 Sustainable Tourism Certification programmes¹ from 9 African countries² were invited to partake in the Accrediting Sustainable Tourism Certification – Africa meeting. Other sustainable tourism stakeholders, such as governmental departments and developing certification programmes were also invited³.

Actual attendance at the meeting enjoyed representation through 28 individuals from 9 African sustainable tourism certification programmes based in Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Morocco and South Africa, two representatives from developing sustainable tourism certification programmes in Mauritius and Madagascar, as well as representatives from the Institute for Tourism (Mozambique), the National Department of Tourism (South Africa), the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa and SNV Rwanda.

The table below provides an overview of countries that were represented as well as the organisations present.

¹ Certification programmes invited were: Botswana tourism, Green Star, Ecotourism Kenya, Green Label Madagascar, the Zakoura Microcredit Foundation, eco-awards Namibia, the Seychelles Sustainability Label, Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa, Heritage Environmental Certification Programme, Green Stay SA, Green Wilderness, Green Leaf Environmental Standard, Green Flag Trail Accreditation, Baobab Certification Programme, Savannah Greenleaf and the South Luangwa Scheme.

² Botswana, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia.

³ The Institute for Tourism (Mozambique), the National Department of Tourism (South Africa), South African National Parks, Indalo Yethu (South Africa's National Environmental Campaign), Tourism Grading Council of South Africa, the Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa, the Development Bank of Southern Africa, and Air Mauritius (developing certification programme), SNV Rwanda.

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Table 1:

| Organisation | Country based in |
|--|------------------|
| Botswana Tourism | Botswana |
| Eco-awards Namibia | Namibia |
| Ecotourism Kenya | Kenya |
| Development Bank of Southern Africa | Southern Africa |
| Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa | South Africa |
| Go To Madagascar | Madagascar |
| Green Leaf Environmental Standard | South Africa |
| Green Stay SA | South Africa |
| Heritage Environmental Certification Programme | South Africa |
| Institute for Tourism | Mozambique |
| National Department of Tourism | South Africa |
| Netherlands Development Organisation - SNV | Rwanda |
| Savannah Greenleaf | South Africa |
| Tourism Grading Council of South Africa | South Africa |
| Zakoura Microcredit Foundation | Morocco |

2. MEETING FACILITATION, ORGANISATION AND OBJECTIVES

The meeting was organised by the Sustainable Tourism Network Southern African (STNSA) secretariat, Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA). It was co-facilitated by Dr. Richard Denman who is the consultant for the Tourism Sustainability Council (TSC) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Ms Catalina Etcheverry (UN Foundation), Andrea Bacher (UNEP representative), Anna Spenceley (TSC Interim Advisory Committee) and Lisa Scriven and Jennifer Seif (FTTSA).

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The results achieved were:

- 9 sustainable tourism certification programmes provided input on the Tourism Sustainability Council's (TSC) accreditation programme and the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC).
- The TSC achieved an improved understanding of how the context of African certification programmes relate to the TSC's proposed accreditation standards.
- The workshop enabled networking and information exchange opportunities between 9 sustainable tourism certification programmes in Africa, the TSC, UNEP and other African sustainable tourism stakeholders.

3. OPENING REMARKS

3.1 Welcome by Jennifer Seif and Anna Spenceley

Jennifer Seif on behalf of Anna Spenceley and the TSC welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that she was looking forward to an open and frank discussion and to learning more about the various initiatives represented including the TSC.

3.2 Purpose and programme for the workshop – Richard Denman (TSC Consultant)

Dr. Denman gave a brief outline of the purpose and programme for the workshop.

3.3 Introductions

Each delegate introduced him/herself to the house and briefly introduced the activities of the organisation he/she was representing.

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Presentation One: Tourism Sustainability in Africa

Dr. Anna Spenceley and Ms Jennifer Seif – refer to Annexure A

- The presentation stressed the importance of sustainable tourism in Africa. Meeting the aspects of the triple bottom line (economic, social and environment) is the main aim of responsible and sustainable tourism, which touches upon:
 - Poverty and inequality
 - Biodiversity conservation
 - Threats related to climate change
 - Cultural heritage
 - Democracy and governance
 - Market demand

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There are a number of sustainable and responsible tourism initiatives occurring in Africa at the moment including: tourism policy and planning, community based natural resource management, community based tourism, protected areas management / PPPs, industry voluntary initiatives (certification, awards, codes of conduct) and trans-boundary initiatives.

The presentation made reference to all known current and planned certification programmes in Africa (please refer to footnote one above).

Issues in Sustainable Tourism:

- Proliferation of labels
- Duplication
- Competing definitions, standards, thematic emphases
- Low level of take up by private sector
- Certification organisations not financially sustainable
- Lack of awareness and action by customers
- Market confusion

Africa State of Play

There are relatively few schemes in operation (compared to other parts of the world). However, good communication exists between schemes and co-operative marketing exists, such as Boundless Southern Africa. There is also good communication between Southern African certification stakeholders due to the establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Network Southern Africa (STNSA).

<http://www.sustainabletourismnetwork.co.za/>

What has been the response?

The presentation noted the various responses to the current state of play globally and in Africa in terms of:

Internationally: Tourism Sustainability Council (TSC) – GSTC + STSC – consolidation and harmonization.

Regionally: Network of the Americas, Sustainable Tourism Network Southern Africa

- communication, coordination, capacity building

Nationally: National standards (Brazil, South Africa) – quality assurance, policy alignment

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4.2 Presentation Two: Tourism Sustainability Council: fostering the increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principals

Ms Catalina Etcheverry – refer to Annexure B

Ms Etcheverry gave a presentation on the creation of the Tourism Sustainability Council, its mission and objectives, the TSC current status, membership, working groups and how the delegates at the conference could get involved.

5. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE TSC

Questions and General Discussion regarding the TSC presentation

- Delegates thought that the TSC objectives needed to be clearer. For example some initially understood that the TSC may be involved in certification, not only accreditation. It was agreed that this type of feedback is useful for the TSC i.e. in terms of strengthening communications with stakeholders.
- Another delegate wanted to know about the accreditation process – how long it would take to develop and pilot. This question was held over as it was the main focus of the two-day workshop.
- A very important point that was discussed here and was a theme throughout the meeting was how the TSC links to national accreditation criteria. Many delegates felt that the TSC should support the national process rather than undermine it, specifically with regard to the South African national minimum standards for responsible tourism (NMSRT) and accreditation process and in general.
- It was however noted and agreed that the TSC cannot align itself to government initiatives that do not align to the GSTC. The South African government representatives present confirmed that the NMSRT/accreditation process is well aligned to the GSTC.

6. PRESENTATION

Presentation Three: Accreditation and certification what is the process?

- Richard Denman – refer to Annexure C

Mr Denman's presentation was designed to clarify terminology and key concepts for delegates, so that everyone would be able to speak using a common language. He defined the meaning of a standard, the processes of

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accreditation and certification, the justification for certification and aims of accreditation. He explained the aims of the forthcoming TSC accreditation manual, what work has been done so far, and how the TSC may relate to accreditation bodies such as ISEAL.

7. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE TSC ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Questions and General Discussion regarding the TSC accreditation presentation

Points of clarification raised by delegates were as follows:

- What tourism activities would the certification programmes be able to certify?
- Who would TSC's members be?
- Would TSC membership by tourism initiatives be an alternative to certification?
- Who makes decisions in the TSC?
- Delegates were interested in the TSC's sub committee and the working groups helping to establish the TSC. Some delegates thought it imperative to include regional representation in these working groups as well as in the board of the TSC itself. Here it was suggested that the STNSA could be allocated a seat on the future TSC board to facilitate linkages with Africa/southern Africa.
- Some delegates agreed with the TSC's aim to promote knowledge about sustainable tourism through, inter alia, membership services, while others thought that this could be problematic as this may conflict with the process of accreditation (this point came up several times in other discussions).
- Delegates also wanted to know if the TSC would provide accreditation guidelines as a 'nice to have' or would the requirements be enforced?

8. PRESENTATION

Presentation Four: Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and standard setting

- Richard Denman and Anna Spenceley – refer to Annexure D

Dr. Denman and Dr. Spenceley provided a bit of background on the GSTC, explained how the statements are organised into four themes, and summarized the content of each theme. They then elaborated on how the GSTC would form the basis of TSC accreditation. This presentation was followed by a short plenary discussion and then group work with report back in plenary (see below).

9. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE GSTC AND STANDARD SETTING

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General Discussion around GSTC and Standard Setting

- The point was made that the relationship between national and international law should be clarified. In some instances, local legislation may not be adequate e.g. labour and environmental legislation – does this mean that international law would be used as a benchmark rather than national law?
- There was strong consensus that legal compliance must always be checked by a certification organisation regardless of whether the property certified is located in a developed or developing country. It is naive to assume that laws are automatically adhered to in “first world” contexts.
- Delegates questioned how realistic it would be to expect a property to meet all the GSTC requirements. One view expressed was that it would be achievable provided that the GSTC are further clarified and slightly adjusted to individual tourism initiatives and the African context.

10. WORKING GROUPS – RELEVANCE OF CRITERIA / STANDARDS FOR AFRICA

- Plenary report back facilitated by Richard Denman

The delegates were broken into working groups each lead by an appointed person. Groups were asked to discuss a list of questions about the GSTC (refer to Annexure E). Groups then came together to give their feedback in the form of a plenary discussion.

Feedback

• 1. Current Coverage

Taking the GSTC as a whole (all four pillars), to what extent are certification schemes in Africa currently covering them? Where are the main gaps? Is there much difference between the certification schemes in this respect?

- The minimum standards in South Africa are aligned to the GSTC but are not a verbatim reproduction – certain items have been added/amended in relation to the South African context.

- Many African schemes follow the ‘green’ aspect most closely. There are gaps regarding social issues and labour standards.

• 2. Current Standard Setting

How do current certification schemes in Africa identify the criteria and standards they use? How frequently are they revised? Are they based on consultation?

- Most schemes are based on national legal requirements rather than international ones.

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-Some schemes make use of consultants to initiate the schemes. Most schemes conduct surveys of existing schemes/standards and base their systems on these.
 -Schemes are either revised as required from feedback during the year, from getting consultants to review them, and/or from benchmarking their criteria against international standards. Most schemes do not schedule reviews but rather review standards (and systems) as the need arises.

- 3. Future Comprehensiveness

How important and realistic is it to require certification schemes to cover all of the GSTC? Could this be achieved over time? Should certification schemes be recognised in some way before they are covering all the criteria?

-The national minimum requirements of South Africa cover the GSTC.
 - Most certification bodies are happy to start trying to cover all of the GSTC. However it was agreed that it is not realistic to expect that certified establishments will meet all these criteria. It was suggested that a minimum % of criteria should be met within each of the four themes; this could take the form of a balanced scorecard approach.
 -As establishments cannot meet all criteria, one delegate requested guidance on 'need to have' criteria versus the 'nice to have'.

- 4. Priority Criteria

Which are the most important criteria amongst the GSTC in the African context? Which are least important? Are any criteria missing, which are important in Africa?

-There should be some refinement of the criteria. For example, not all tourism initiatives need to cover issues surrounding 'wildlife' e.g. urban hotels.
 -It is the intent behind the statements that counts
 -Some standards are less relevant in Africa, such as noise. There are other issues which are more important.
 -Group 4 said that the most important sections were sections B and C.
 -Group 1 said that they agreed with the point above. They also specified that Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) was very important in post-apartheid South Africa.
 -Group 2 agreed with the point above about local priorities that are missing in the GSTC, such as BBBEE.
 -Group 3 highlighted two areas that need to be discussed: A7 should include the word "accelerate the communication of information" and they said that the offsetting of GHGEs was too stringent a requirement for South Africa.

- 5. Clarity as an Accreditable Standard

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Do you find the GSTC, as currently expressed, to be sufficiently clear in terms of identifying precisely what certification schemes need to be assessing? What would make them clearer and more usable for this purpose?

-Group 1 thought that the wording of the concepts needed to be clarified. They suggested supplying an interpretation manual to accompany the GSTC. They also noted that too many concepts were included in one criterion.

-Group 2 asked for the TSC to clarify the relationship between the GSTC and local standards.

-Group 3 suggested including a glossary of terms.

-Group 4 asked for a weighting and rating system designed for certification programmes in relation to the GSTC.

• 6. Process vs. Performance

Should certification schemes, where possible, be required to check performance of enterprises (e.g. acceptable levels of water consumption) and not just processes (e.g. that water consumption is measured and addressed)? For what activities *must* performance be measured? Does such a requirement create difficulties?

-Group 2 said that performance indicators create difficulties as one has to decide upon an acceptable level. Concern about bias by assessors was also voiced.

-Group 3 asked how one would obtain a performance number? Target cannot be included in a standard. However, a performance indicator could be used to encourage behaviour change.

-Group 4 suggested that performance should definitely be measured for: water, energy, waste, recycling, corporate responsibility, purchasing and procurement and employment. However, the systems have to be simple to follow.

-Another delegate specified that performance should be used where they will add value e.g. to change behaviour. They are not valuable, per se.

-A further delegate asked that the performance measures should be very specific so that they cannot be misunderstood.

• 7. Challenges with Individual Criteria

Taking each of the 4 pillars of the GSTC in turn, which criteria do you think will present the greatest challenge in defining a clear standard for accreditation? Do you have any suggestions about how this might be met?

-Section A was seen to be most problematic

-Clear indicators are needed

-Local versus international legislation – needs to be clarified. Is local adequate and is the international contextualized?

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11. PRESENTATIONS BY DELEGATES

Ten-minute presentations were made by almost all of the organisations present. The purpose of this session was to enable delegates to learn about one another's programmes. The session was very well attended and marked by lively discussion. See Annexure F for email addresses to obtain copies of these presentations.

DAY TWO

Programme Director for the Day – Jennifer Seif (FTTSA)

12. PRESENTATION

Presentation Five: Certification procedures – requirements of programmes

- Richard Denman – refer to Annexure G

Dr. Denman discussed requirements of certification bodies and the requirements of accreditation according to ISO and ISEAL. He explained where the TSC was at according to documents written, explained the key requirements of ISO Guide 65 and explained how the TSC needed feedback on these requirements. He explained the key questions to discuss in light of what schemes are currently doing, difficulties experienced, what they could and/or should be doing.

13. ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS

A plenary discussion was lead by Jennifer Seif on the questions below (Annexure H):

Consensus Points

- Certification programmes should be complying with international best practice.
- Auditing should be regular and there should be high levels of transparency. Certification and accreditation procedures including standards should be available publicly and free of charge.
- Certification programmes are positive about the role of the TSC, but there was concern expressed that the costs of accreditation could be so high as to exclude participation by especially the smaller schemes.

Feedback:

- 1. SCALE OF CURRENT SCHEMES

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How many tourism-related sustainability certification schemes are there in Africa? What number and types of enterprise have been certificated?

- See footnote 1 above for schemes. Different schemes have certified different numbers of tourism products – ranging from less than 10 to nearly 100.
- Many schemes in Africa certify non accommodation product in addition to accommodation. Ecotourism Kenya is even looking into certifying tour operators.

•2. VALUE SEEN IN ACCREDITATION

What value do the certification bodies place on the idea of being accredited through the TSC? Would they be prepared to devote resources to the process?

- Certification programmes should be complying with international best practice.
- Certification programmes are positive about the role of the TSC, but knowing the actual costs of accreditation is necessary before commitment can be made.
- Several delegates noted that there is nothing stopping a certification organisation from going for ISO 65 certification directly, which underscores the need for the TSC to add value. Certificates will go the TSC route (and pay for it) over ISO provided the TSC provides benefits that outweigh the costs of TSC accreditation; TSC is positioned to provide such benefits whereas ISO is not.

•3. DESIRABILITY OF COMPLIANCE

Should the TSC require accredited certification bodies to comply with international requirements and guidelines (e.g. ISO 17065 and ISEAL)? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages the TSC requiring compliance?

- There was a fairly complicated debate around this set of questions. It was agreed that the TSC should base accreditation on ISO 65 at minimum – some delegates felt ISO 17027 would be even better (although it is more complex). Certification schemes expressed confidence that they would be able to meet ISO 65 requirements, although they would have to invest resources to achieve total compliance. It will be important for the TSC to inform certification programmes of the accreditation timeline so that schemes may begin to prepare for accreditation as soon as possible – this should be clarified along with the cost structure as soon as the accreditation manual is complete.

•4. EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL OR NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

What experience do the certification schemes in Africa have of international requirements for certification bodies? Have any schemes been accredited by international or national bodies? Any lessons from this?

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- Heritage is recognized by Green Globe.
- No schemes have been accredited internationally.
- No schemes have been certified by ISO although some schemes have based their own standards/systems on ISO guidelines.

•5. INTERNAL PROCEDURES

Do the certification bodies have their own (recognised) quality management procedures? What measures are taken to ensure that the corps of auditors is sufficient, trained and knowledgeable? How is impartiality assured? Do you see any problems with meeting international requirements here?

-Quality management procedures were defined for the group as comprising: internal/organisational policies and procedures as well as the policies and procedures used to manage the certification system. Most schemes present indicated that this is an area where improvements will be required prior to applying for accreditation. The transaction costs of compliance were discussed and it was agreed that preparation for accreditation will most likely require schemes to invest time and money, in addition to the actual costs of accreditation.

-Based on information provided by delegates, it was clear that schemes in Africa use second and third party verification (or a combination of both). Schemes present expressed confidence in their auditing procedures including the ways in which auditors are trained – this is typically through a combination of formal and informal/on the job training.

-Impartiality: The committee makes decisions and not the auditors. If auditors are on the committee the auditor for that particular programme cannot make the final decision. Most schemes appear to be fulfilling this requirement at present.

ADDITION TO 5: ADVICE/CONSULTATION. Do the certification bodies provide advice to enterprises they certify? How important is this as a service and in terms of impact achieved? Could/should this stop?

-It emerged that the majority of schemes offer advice/consultancy in addition to certification.

-The difference between 'advice' and 'consultancy' was not clear.

-Services offered alongside certification include: training including training workshops for specific properties who are in the process of applying for certification; design of environmental management and other types of systems; sustainability reporting etc.

- There was consensus that these services add value to businesses and that certified entities value/expect to be able to access this type of assistance from the certification programme. Certification is a long term relationship.

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- But the people giving advice/consultancy should not also be the auditors.
- Demonstrate how systems are working and that they are working according to the principles of ISO 65 in order to be accredited.

•6. THE AUDITING PROCESS

Does/should the auditing process always involve inspection visits (as well as written evidence) and how frequent are they/should they be? What subsequent checks on the audits are/should be undertaken?

- Current practice ranges from every 8 to 24 months.
- Auditing must be on site (certification may not be based on only first party verification)
- One view was that the TSC should not specify a minimum time frame (benchmark e.g. every 24 months) but rather require scheme to justify its procedures.

•7. TRANSPARANCY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Should standards and procedures be publicly available to all and is this the case with the schemes in Africa? What procedures do/should exist for handling appeals? How is/should the use of the award/certificate be controlled, including withdrawal?

- Yes, standards and procedures should be publicly available and free of charge. This helps businesses make informed decisions about certification and also gives consumers/tour operators confidence to use certified properties.
- Schemes presently do publish information about their operations online although some do not currently have standards and fee schedules available to the public.
- The meeting clarified that this requirement would not mean that questionnaires/check lists must be published. It was felt that this type of documentation could be treated confidentially as it constitutes work product/intellectual property.

•8. STABILITY

How stable (financially and in other ways) are the certification schemes in Africa and could this be a problem?

- Most dependent on external funding. But one scheme is 100% self-funded.
- Schemes stressed that accreditation needs to be affordable.
- Auditors flying in from Europe to accredit programmes would be too expensive.
- TSC must work with national accreditation so that costs are not duplicated.

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- Accreditation requirement should be the ability to demonstrate sufficient resources to operate during the accreditation cycle – it does not matter where the money comes from as long as the financial risk is managed effectively.

14. PRESENTATION

Presentation Six: Tourism Sustainability Council: Market Access

- Catalina Etcheverry – Refer to Annexure I

Ms Etcheverry highlighted the issues of lack of market incentive for sustainability in tourism, the confusion between certification and other tourism awards and endorsements, and how the GSTC partnership wishes to overcome these challenges. She explained the current efforts being made, elaborated on the pros and cons of certification and the challenges that exist in promoting sustainable tourism products. She included questions for delegates to ponder about market access solutions and asked for feedback on this.

15. WORKING GROUPS ON MARKET ACCESS NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Delegates broke into three working groups each lead by an appointed person, wherein they discussed a list of questions provided in advance (refer to Annexure J). They then came together to give their feedback in the form of a plenary discussion, which was facilitated by Jennifer Seif.

- 1. What are the benefits of certification?
 - Access to markets
 - Credibility
 - Eligibility for preferential procurement
 - You are part of a network
 - Increased level of visitor satisfaction

- 2. How does your program facilitate increased market visibility for businesses?
 - Website / electronic communications
 - Media
 - Trade shows
 - Linkages with tour operators

- 3. What challenges have you encountered in making your certified products more visible?
 - Finance
 - Human resources (person power and expertise)

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-Explaining the concepts of 'certified product' and 'sustainably operated' in layman's terms.

- 4. Have there been any successful models to increase market visibility for sustainable tourism businesses?

-Green Globe – partnership with Heritage
 -Collective marketing at shows
 - Dedicated media

- 5. What incentives exist to make tourism businesses become more sustainable?

-Beyond marketing there is a lot: cost savings, subsidies, procurement requirements from businesses with green practices.

- 6. How can the marketplace be used to create solutions to the problems of visibility for sustainable products?

-Partnerships with tour operators. Consumer influence is very important to growth.

- 7. Who are ideal partners to help increase market visibility and incentives?

-National tourism authorities/ministries
 -Associations
 - Media
 - Tour operators

- 8. What are your experiences with Sustainability Indexing (third-party scoring of the LEVEL of sustainability of certain businesses and products)?

-There seemed to be some confusion as to what Sustainability Indexing actually was.

- It was noted that the Johannesburg Securities Exchange (JSE) has had a CSI index for some years now but that it is not yet very successful; it will soon however be a legal requirement for listed companies to participate in the CSI index.

- 9. Is sustainability indexing (or scoring) a viable option for the tourism industry?

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- There did not seem to be a concrete answer to this as this strategy needed to be further elaborated on: How will the index work? Will non certified as well as certified properties be indexed?

•10. If sustainability efforts are more visible, will it incentivize more businesses to increase their sustainability?

-There was wide agreement that this is a valid statement.

•11. Would you support a TSC-sponsored Scoring System similar to other sustainability indexes currently in use (for example the Forest Sustainability Council seal, Dow Jones Sustainability Index, Columbia University Environmental Sustainability Index, WalMart Index, GreenGlobe Scoring System)?

-This could be a useful resource, some kind of benchmark.

-It could be used in conjunction with other kinds of programmes.

-However, tourism is sector specific. You have to compare like with like.

-Other delegates thought it too technically complicated.

-As the TSC has so many items on its plate right now, this project could perhaps be shifted to a later stage in time i.e. the TSC should focus on a few immediate results until it is very well established and has elicited buy-in for main services like accreditation.

•12. What challenges would a TSC-sponsored Scoring System face?

-The market is not big enough yet

-Any services offered by TSC must not compete with certification

-It would be resource intensive. The TSC needs to get going first. Get core practices in place and become well known first.

-The scoring system must be flexible in order to be fair.

•13. Would you be willing in participating in the scoring system design?

-Delegates felt unable to answer this question until more clarity is provided by the TSC.

An additional point of discussion focused on the TSC logo and who will be able to use it. This harked back to the previous day's discussion about proposed TSC membership: will members be able to use the TSC logo? Who can use the accreditation seal?

-The accreditation seal should be used by certification bodies and not by certified properties as this would create logo confusion.

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- Delegates again expressed concern about the TSC recruiting members who are also eligible for certification – membership is an easier proposition to attain and why go the certification route if you can use the TSC logo as a member?
- The TSC should not introduce too many logos/seals at once – focus on core identity first. Accreditation seal to share look and feel but remain distinctive.

16. CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL WRAP-UP

Farewells and Closure

- Catalina Etcheverry and Andrea Bacher

Catalina Etcheverry and Andrea Bacher thanked all the delegates on behalf of the UN Foundation / TSC and UNEP. They also thanked FTTSA for organizing the meeting.

Jennifer Seif thanked everyone for their participation including UNEP/TSC representatives. She also thanked the FTTSA team especially Kate Finlay for a job well done. Jennifer mentioned that the high levels of consensus and robust debate achieved over two days reflect positively on the work of the Sustainable Tourism Network Southern Africa (STNSA) as well as the working group in South Africa that has been developing the NMSRT. There is a strong rationale for cooperation and the STNSA is prepared to take on the role of Africa focal point for the TSC. It was agreed that additional consultation between delegates and the TSC will flow through STNSA so that the Secretariat may keep track of comments and continue to lobby the TSC on behalf of its membership and partners in other parts of Africa.

A number of delegates then gave their own short opinions on the meeting and gave their thanks for being invited.

17. LIST OF FINAL ANNEXURES

Annexure A – Tourism Sustainability in Africa – Anna Spenceley and Jennifer Seif

Annexure B – Tourism Sustainability Council: fostering the increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principals – Catalina Etcheverry

Annexure C – Accreditation and certification what is the process? – Richard Denman

Annexure D – Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and standard setting – Richard Denman and Anna Spenceley

Annexure E – Questions on Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and standard setting – Facilitated by Richard Denman

Annexure F – Contact list

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Annexure G – Certification procedures – requirements of programmes – Richard Denman

Annexure H – Questions on processes used in certification – Facilitated by Jennifer Seif

Annexure I – Tourism Sustainability Council: Market Access – Catalina Etcheverry

Annexure J – Questions on market access – Facilitated by Jennifer Seif

18. GROUP PHOTOGRAPH



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