

Tourism Alert and Action Forum Statement for World Tourism Day 2020

World Tourism Day 2020 celebrations, held on 27 September, will be focused on “Tourism: Building Peace! Fostering Knowledge!”. It was planned to be held in Djibouti and Addis Ababa, as decided by the European Council on Tourism and Trade Executive Board, that is before COVID-19 struck.

The assertion that tourism promotes peace is a mainstay of World Tourism Organization pronouncements and documents. For instance, article one of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (1999) heralds: “Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies”.

The members of the Tourism Alert and Action Forum come from organizations around the world that have joined in solidarity to oppose exploitative forms of tourism and to act in solidarity with communities against such practices. We do not recognize this proposition that tourism builds peace when what we witness from the communities we work with is an imposition of tourism for the benefit of tourism corporates and at the expense of local communities. This kind of peace is an unequal peace where locals are left to grasp at the crumbs from the table of tourism, hoping to get employment or some sort of trickle-down from tourism.

This form of tourism does not offer a robust form of peace. It does not offer respect and understanding. Those that gain work in tourism are often in precarious, seasonal and low-paid work. Profits are extracted by the corporations while the damages are left for the local community to bear. In the worst cases, the local community is dispossessed of their lands, resources and cultures; being left displaced and devastated while the tourists enjoy their gated resorts and the corporations rake in profits.

The only form of peace that should underpin tourism processes is that of peace with justice. This is not the peace advocated by the WTO of acquiescence to imposed tourism, but rather a peace that accompanies forms of tourism that are derived from a commitment to community empowerment, community benefit, community activation and continual community consent.

TAAF’s Nine Point Plan that was set out in our statement “Taking back our communities post COVID” is a peace with justice approach to tourism, not the meaningless public relations twaddle of the WTO. We repeat this pronouncement here and re-commit ourselves to this agenda:

- 1) Tourism is defined by the local communities, because it occurs in the homeplaces of local communities, it impacts their lives and they provide many of the workers for tourism. It is they rather than the tourism industry and the tourists who must set agendas.
- 2) We declare ecology, society and economy as interconnected. Public health and well-being depends on a strong society with full support for the public good and an ecological environment that is protected and valued for its inter-generational and multi-species support.
- 3) A policy of constant growth and expansion in tourism is not compatible with a fair and sustainable future. Growth approaches must be abandoned.
- 4) Globalization processes have so far served the elite and powerful. We must revise our priorities to sustain local well-being rather than constantly grow vulnerable global supply chains.
- 5) Workers in both the formal and informal sectors of tourism have a right to fair pay, safe and secure work. It is the crime of the hospitality and tourism industries that they are characterized by wage theft, poor working conditions and precarious work.
- 6) Tourists have no right to tour. COVID-19 reminded us the doors can be shut.

- 7) Multinational corporations and powerful state corporations only have the right to do business in the jurisdictions where they pay adequate taxes and abide by environmental, social, employment and economic regulations. The days of the free-wheeling approach are over.
- 8) Tourism brings violence and supports state violence. We must activate solidarity with places under occupation, including Palestine, Kashmir, West Papua, Hawai'i, Guam, Western Sahara and others.
- 9) Tourism is not an end in itself. Tourism must serve societies and communities and fit in the larger sustainable development capacities of all places where it occurs.

This World Tourism Day, when international tourism is effectively shut down, let's commit ourselves to this Nine Point Plan. We must refuse to allow a return to business as usual for an industry that has been so disrespectful to the people and the places it has sought to exploit for profit. This World Tourism Day let's commit to a call for "no more"!

Tourism Alert and Action Forum – TAAF

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