

Tourism Alert and Action Forum Statement on World Tourism Day 2019 Tourism and Jobs: a better future for all

This World Tourism Day (WTD), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has focused on tourism and jobs. Its announcement opens with four dotpoints¹:

- Tourism's role in job creation is often undervalued. This is despite the fact that tourism generates 10% of world jobs and is included in Sustainable Development Goal 8 for its potential to create decent work.
- New policies are needed to maximize tourism's potential to create more and better jobs, especially for women and youth. New policies are also needed to reflect and incorporate ongoing advances in technology.
- Policies and actions should be geared towards addressing the current mismatch between tourism skills that are taught and those that tourism employers need.
- This requires a holistic approach to the future of work in tourism, with heightened cooperation between all actors, including the public and private sectors.

We at the Tourism Alert and Action Forum counter with our own four dotpoints:

- Tourism's role in job creation is often overvalued. Jobs for local people are often: scarce at higher skills levels of management, precarious, seasonal, underpaid and exploitative.
- New policies are needed to ensure that tourism jobs are well-regulated, unionized, pay a living wage and are protected from exploitation and slavery. Two pillars are essential: a new international economic order to address developing countries calls for justice in an unfair global system and a basic living wage in all countries.
- Policies and actions should be geared to ensuring tourism is developed only as a contributor to balanced economy; tourism dependency must be avoided. Tourism education should not be hijacked to shape labour into suitable wage slaves; instead, it must be offer a holistic and integrated curriculum that explains how tourism fits into the development of a fair and just economy that is geared to support local community well-being.
- We demand a holistic approach to tourism that removes it from the control of capital and returns it to local sovereignty and decision-making.

We invite all stakeholders to hear this indictment of tourism and reject the lie that is sold that tourism delivers jobs of value. Three phenomena serve as examples of the current injustices of tourism's labour and employment impacts: sexual slavery and human trafficking in the context of tourism; child exploitation in orphanage tourism; and widespread abuse of migrant labour in segments like cruise ship tourism and events tourism.

Tourism has been associated with human trafficking for sexual exploitation for decades. Despite efforts by NGOs such as ECPAT, predatory tourists continue to use tourism to exploit vulnerable segments in host community populations, including children. ECPAT declared: "Human trafficking is worth \$150 billion annually and affects more than 40 million people worldwide. An estimated 5.5 million of these are children. Its victims often end up being sexually exploited in travel and tourist destinations around the globe". This is the dirty underbelly of tourism and bodies such as the UNWTO seem unwilling to address the larger structural conditions that enable this abuse to occur.

¹ <http://wtd.unwto.org/content/wtd-2019-about-world-tourism-day>

Even the tourism niches, such as orphanage tourism, that are described as more benign may feature abuse and exploitation. A Cambodian woman who grew up in such an orphanage explained to an Australian parliamentary enquiry: "The support of orphanages has created a thriving industry in which children are separated from their families and subjected to terrible abuse and neglect, as I was — being used as a commodity to generate funding".

In the final example we provide to shatter the illusions of WTD2019 is the appalling abuse and exploitation of migrant labour in building Qatar's stadia and other infrastructure to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Journalists and human rights organisations such as Amnesty International have been drawing attention to the slavery conditions workers from countries such as Nepal, India and the Philippines have been subjected to since at least 2013.

These separate cases are not isolated but rather indicative of a pattern. Current forms of tourism as promoted by powerful bodies such as the UNWTO are based on fulfilling tourists' demands for tourism experiences that deliver massive profits to major tourism industry interests at the expense of host communities and their workers. Profit is extracted through a model of exploitation that is underpinned by structural injustices. The UNWTO and other major tourism promoting bodies consistently fail to engage with the systemic and structural injustices that foster abuse and exploitation in and through tourism.

We offer our four points above as a counter agenda to this WTD2019's deceptive agenda. Please join us and share this message: We demand a holistic approach to tourism that removes it from the control of capital and places it under local sovereignty and decision-making.

Signed members of the Tourism Alert and Action Forum (TAAF), 12 September 2019

For more information see: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TourismAlertAndActionForum/>