

# MEXICO



CHAPTER

# 4



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## AGENDA 21

### I.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

Official Name of “Best Practice” Initiative	Agenda 21
Name of Contributor/ Organization	SECTUR (Ministry of Tourism) and SEMARNAT (Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources).
Addresses/Contact Details	Mexican Ministry of Tourism Schiller 138 8th Floor Col. Chapultepec Morales C.P. 11587, Mexico, D.F.  Tel: +52 55 30 03 16 00 ext. 6009 / 6017 Contact Person: Liliana Garcia Huerta (SubDirector of Strategic Policies)
Year The Initiative Was Started & Completed	2002
Location of Best Practice Project	Mexico

### 2.0 KEY SUMMARY

- 2.1 Agenda 21 for Tourism in Mexico is a comprehensive initiative to make tourism more sustainable. It is based on a framework that was established by the central government departments working together to implement a partnership model at a local level utilizing a range of instruments.
- 2.2 In this regard, this is a joint initiative of SECTUR (Ministry of Tourism) and SEMARNAT (Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources). It was launched in 2002. Essentially, it provides a tool for improving tourism impact at the municipal (local destination) level, supported by state authorities and based on a process developed, coordinated and championed at a federal level.
- 2.3 This large scale initiative in Mexico is founded on principles stemming from the 1992 Earth Summit and its Agenda 21. It takes into account international and regional policies and declarations made since then; such as the establishment of a Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Zone in 1999, the WTTC and WTO Agenda 21 for Travel and Tourism and the attention paid to sustainable tourism at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

- 2.4 The initiative is firmly anchored in its national policy and stems from the National Development Plan 2001-2006 which sets an overall vision for Mexico up to 2025 with two policy programs; the National Program for the Environment & Natural Resources and the National Tourism Program. The latter identifies the 'maintenance of sustainable tourism destinations' as one of four Principle Axes, which calls for better, integrated planning at a local level supported by the three levels of government.



### 3.0 THE OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Respond to the challenges faced by the Mexican tourism industry and market trends as tourism is of high priority for the Mexican government;
- 3.2 Provide a role model in balanced regional development;
- 3.3 Address the environmental and social problems such as the disorderly urban growth that is close to major tourist centers, deterioration of the environment and the loss of cultural diversity;
- 3.4 Further integrate tourism to the local economies for it to bring maximum benefits to the local communities;
- 3.5 Ensure continuous flow of tourists who are more informed and discerning by meeting their new expectations in transportation, geopolitical, security, social and cultural considerations as much as possible.

### 4.0 THE MODEL

- 4.1 The approach was based on extensive consultation, including focus groups and discussion panels with government bodies, private sector, academics and NGOs. Meetings to discuss initial proposals were held with a range of tourism and environment agencies, and consultation was also undertaken via an internet site.
- 4.2 The most interesting aspect of this initiative in Mexico is the comprehensive framework for action which is made up of seven parts.





#### **4.2.1 Implementing Local Agenda 21 Within Municipalities Involved With Tourism**

This involves defining an integrated model for destination management focused on sustainability, and is sufficiently flexible to take account of local conditions and opinions. Pilot projects were launched in 5 destinations, with plans to spread this to 25 principal destinations in Mexico, and eventually to the country as a whole. Results were disseminated to relevant stakeholders, communities and tourists;

#### **4.2.2 Developing A System Of Sustainable Tourism Indicators**

The use of agreed indicators is recognized as a very potent instrument for strengthening sustainability. Indicators have been developed for different types of destination, tested in the pilot areas and then applied in all destinations;

#### **4.2.3 Promoting Better Environmental Practices In Businesses And Destinations**

This involves developing a program on water conservation for tourism service providers and establishing an overall sustainability certification scheme and label for hotels, other tourism enterprises and eventually for the destinations;

#### **4.2.4 Developing Incentives For Sustainable Tourism Activities**

This is about establishing financial assistance programs from a variety of sources with an emphasis on setting up schemes specifically aimed at improving small and medium sized enterprises and disseminating information on these sources;

#### **4.2.5 Implementing A Training And Technology Transfer Program**

This is about human resource development to support sustainability of enterprises and destinations through effective training based on needs assessment, careful design, delivery of courses and benchmarking results. It also covers dissemination of successful cases and updating university teaching with indepth research on tourism sustainability;

#### **4.2.6 Utilising Environmental Legislation As A Basis For Integrated Development**

This includes participation in programs for the management and protection of coastal zones together with studying, applying and developing environmental legislation and its application to land use planning on tourist destinations.

#### **4.2.7 Establishing Ecotourism In Protected Natural Areas**

This is about working with local communities to define a model and methodology for the development of ecotourism in protected areas, identifying areas where ecotourism will be successful, investing in appropriate infrastructure such as visitor centres and trails and training businesses.

4.3 A Local Agenda 21 Committee for each location is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the program. The Federal Tourism Secretariat acts as the technical consultant to the committees, with respective state tourism organizations to serve them and provide the links to other state functions. Each committee



develops proposal for action to achieve more sustainability in conjunction with the local, state and federal stakeholders while taking account the diverse and unique circumstances of each place.

## 5.0 THE IMPACT

- 5.1 By mid 2004, the Local Agenda 21 process had been established in 5 pilot areas followed by 15 further destinations, which were selected to cover 7 different types of location:
- Large integrally planned resorts (Cancun);
  - Beach resorts (Acapulco);
  - Large cities (Tijuana);
  - Medium sized towns (Merida);
  - World heritage cities (Oaxaca);
  - Magical towns – a national branding of culturally rich places (Cuetzalan); and nature areas (Jalcomulco).
- 5.2 The Sustainable Tourism Indicator system has been established to make preliminary diagnosis of the sustainability conditions and to determine possible improvement measures for each of the destinations. This has proven to be very important in identifying and presenting the issues for each committee and in assisting in decision making. These initial diagnoses are then verified by local stakeholders. The indicators used cover:
- **Environmental Impact**  
Availability of fresh water, water consumption level, treatment of water/ sewage, energy consumption, air quality, generation of waste, handling and recycling of waste and environmental education;
  - **Socio-Economic Impact**  
Unemployment level, contribution to local economy, contribution to local income tax, wellbeing and engagement of the local population, demographic pressure and security access;





- **Tourism Supply And Demand**  
Visitor satisfaction, visitor spending, occupancy and seasonality, price, certification, attractiveness of destination and bathing water quality;
- **Urban Development**  
Planning and environmental legislations programs, control of urban growth, provision of infrastructure, state of housing and preservation of image (architectural and landscape).

5.3 The Environmental Quality certification program for tourism enterprises has been established and certificates have been awarded principally to hotels and also to other enterprises such as marinas and attractions.

5.4 In the area of technical exchange, training programs on the application of Local Agenda 21 in tourist destinations have been held in partnership with the World Tourism Organization and on international beach certification in partnership with the World Bank.

## 6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

6.1 The use of performance indicators provides a powerful measurement method to gauge the success of any project. Commonly used in business enterprises, these indicators have proven their relevance and effectiveness in tourism planning and management as well.

6.2 The practice of proactive management seems to underline the Agenda 21 to address all key critical areas that are drivers to the performance of the tourism industry. The 7-point plan is a classic illustration of the soundness of the plan in addressing all the key issues caused by the fast changing and challenging tourism industry.

6.3 A plan seldom succeeds with only the decision makers and planners playing their role. One of the other outstanding features of the plan is in getting the involvement of local authorities and communities to form a structured and organized system. Grass root participation has also proven to be a key ingredient for success in sustainable tourism initiatives.

6.4 Like all plans and actions, there must always be the foresight to see and feel what is ahead. There will always be a need to improve and/or improvise current practices instead of simply being complacent that the 'job is over'. Some examples of areas that need continuous improvement are strengthening the partnership and operation of local committees, improving the measurement system on performance of the industry, getting further participation of companies in quality programs and strengthening the involvement of federal organizations in the overall initiative.

6.5 Finally, the approach and the strategy used to formulate Agenda 21 is in itself an excellent initiative which can be replicated by other economies who wish to improve their master tourism plans. Tourism is well developed in Mexico and it certainly makes a good role model for many.