



## INFORMATION NOTE

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### **EXPERTS TO STUDY SUCCESSFUL ONLINE TOURISM SITES TO FIND USEFUL PRACTICES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

A group of experts on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for the development of tourism will meet this week to study successful “e-tourism” websites from developed and developing countries and regions. Case studies will be reviewed from Benin, Canada, the Caribbean, France, Honduras, Madagascar, the United States and Viet Nam.

The experts will meet Wednesday through Friday (30 November – 2 December) at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Their meeting comes two weeks after the [World Summit on the Information Society](#) (held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November) highlighted the impact of ICT on a variety of economic sectors in developing countries, including tourism.

In industrialized nations, the travel sector is the leading generator of e-commerce revenue. The enormous success of e-tourism has attracted the attention of developing countries hoping to reap similar gains. Worldwide, travel generated \$52.4 billion in profits in 2004 and is predicted to yield some \$119 billion by 2010, according to Forrester Research.

Many developing countries have already put in place some of the elements needed to successfully market tourism online. This week’s meeting will enable representatives of such countries to better understand the possibilities offered by online portals. Experts from around the world, representatives from international and regional organizations, and e-tourism specialists will discuss how to conceive and implement effective e-tourism strategies. Because tourism concerns private businesses as much as public entities, effective e-tourism systems depend on establishing partnerships between the private and public sectors.

Tourism is a way for many developing nations to attract foreign currency and expand employment. The influence of ICT on the sector is expected to grow, and effective use of the Internet for tourism can bring immediate and tangible returns. ICT can redress current imbalances, where a significant percentage of tourism profits goes not to the developing countries visited by tourists but to firms based in industrialized nations. The Internet can enable poorer nations to promote and manage travel and tourism themselves, eliminating intermediaries. The expertise that comes from the application of e-tourism may also enable ICT to be expanded into other economic sectors. And it can enable developing countries to win a higher profile for their tourism destinations

and to offer products and destinations based on local knowledge which are rarely promoted by travel services based abroad. E-tourism can also take advantage of the growing number of sophisticated online travel “shoppers” by offering packages targeted to specific groups of customers.

The challenge for developing countries is not only to put in place the technology for e-tourism but to develop plans that are innovative enough to allow public authorities, travel agencies, and local firms providing hotels, meals and other tourism services to work together so that destinations are effectively promoted, arrangements and financial transactions are handled in the country concerned, and marketing and advertising can compete effectively with offerings from overseas.

Participants in this week’s meeting include:

- Representatives of the public and private tourism sectors, including Afoofa Solutions (Malaysia), Chameleon International (South Africa), the Caribbean Tourism Organization, Cendant Corporation (United States), Benin Ecotourism Concern and Viet Nam's Centre for Tourism Information Technology
- The International Higher Institute for Tourism of Tangier (Morocco) and the School of E-Business Management (Italy)
- International organizations, including the World Tourism Organization and the International Air Transport Association.

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