

PRESS RELEASE

World Social Tourism Congress 2014 – São Paulo Tourism for development

Brussels, 23.10.14

The 26th Social Tourism World Congress, organised by the International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO) in partnership and with the support of *Serviço Social do Comércio* (SESC SP), was held in São Paulo, Brazil, from 7 to 10 October 2014. Under the main theme "**Tourism based on development: unity in diversity**", this event, held for the first time in South America, allowed 300 participants from 22 countries to debate and exchange on topics relating to the right to tourism, holidays and travel, to the sources of funding for social and fair tourism, and the social and political construction of that form of tourism.

During the opening session, which was attended by the representative of SESC SP, **Luiz Massaro Galina**, the Minister of Tourism for Brazil, **Vinicius Nobre Lages**, and UNWTO Executive Director, **Márcio Favilla**, among others, ISTO President, **Jean-Marc Mignon**, insisted on how important it was to focus on a concept of tourism that benefits the people. He also pointed out that the development of tourism should serve the widest general interest, and become accessible to more children and youth, families, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and should not be limited to international tourism, however important it may be, but also focus on domestic tourism.

On the latter point, the Minister of Tourism for Brazil, Mr Vinicius Lages, detailed in his speech that **domestic tourism** had shown significant growth in recent years in Brazil, with figures increasing from 30 to 100 million tourists, and noted that over 20 million people had gained access to the formal labour market and thus were able to benefit from paid vacation.

Among the issues addressed during the plenary sessions, which allowed to gain insight into the diverse experiences in the field of tourism based on development in several regions of the world (Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe), it is worth mentioning **the significant decline in public funding** to help people go on holidays, particularly in Europe; **the poor working conditions affecting many employees** in the tourism sector, especially in some large chain hotels, and **the wide gap that exists between the right to holidays in theory and its actual application** for many citizens physically or financially limited in their effective participation in tourism activities.

Several **best practices from South America, among others**, in terms of social, accessible, fair and community tourism, were introduced during workshops by speakers from several countries, who highlighted the benefits of partnerships between the public and private sectors, and the key role of host communities in the success of fair and community tourism projects.

During the conclusive conference, **Dr. Sergio Molina** focused on the relation between the concepts of tourism and development, by declaring that what actually mattered was not to focus on the increase in the number of tourists, but on the impact of tourism on the political, economic, social and human development of every member of a community. He also highlighted the need to work towards another form of tourism, a **creative tourism** that fosters innovation, social participation, solidarity, sustainability, responsibility and excellence. In this regard, social tourism should not limit its scope of action to travel, but should include the opportunities it implies in terms of inclusion.



In conjunction with the congress, **ISTO Alliance for Training and Research in Social and Fair Tourism**, held its second conference, which featured the presentation of 10 research papers by scholars selected as a result of a call for papers. Furthermore, 19 research papers along with cases of best practices, were presented during an e-Poster session.

ISTO took advantage of the congress to organise, in partnership with the European Commission and SESC SP, a workshop on senior tourism. Entitled "**Senior tourism in the European Union: a growing market – cooperation with South America**", this workshop featured the presentation of European Commission initiatives in this sector, examples of national programmes developed in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, as well as exchange experiences between both continents aiming at identifying opportunities and mechanisms that could contribute to increase tourism flows of senior citizens between Europe and South America, while taking into account seasonality.

Last but not least, the Congress allowed ISTO to hold its General Assembly, which renewed half of its Board of Directors, and adopted the action plan for the next two years. The new Board elected ISTO Executive Committee, and confirmed **Jean-Marc Mignon** for a second term of office as President of ISTO, and **Yves Godin** as Secretary General of the organisation. The regional sections also held their assemblies and elected their representatives. **Flávia Roberta Costa** (SESC SP- Brazil) was elected President of the Board of Directors of ISTO-Americas, which celebrated the 20th anniversary of its creation; members of the Europe section of ISTO adopted a strategic plan on "Tourism for All" for the next 5 years, and elected a Coordination Committee, with **Fabrizio Pozzoli** (Federcultura Turismo Sport / Confcooperative - Italy) as President and **Patrick Brault** (Vacances Ouvertes – France) as Secretary.

Throughout the congress, and even after, for those who had the opportunity to visit the **SESC SP Holiday centre in Bertoga**, and meet members of an **indigenous Guarani community**, the participants were able to discover the impressive social tourism programmes developed by SESC SP, which benefit many groups of the Brazilian society and allow them to get to know the natural, historic, cultural and gastronomic treasures of this large country.

For more information :

Secrétariat OITS
Ruut Van Laer
Communication Officer
Tel : + 32 2 2741542
rvanlaer@oits-isto.org

SESC São Paulo
Sílvia Hirao
Coordination of Social Tourism
Tel : + 55 11 2607 8078
silvia@sescsp.org.br

Organisation internationale du tourisme social (OITS) – Rue Watteuu 2-6 – 1000 Bruxelles – Belgique
Tel : + 32 2 274 15 40 - Fax : + 32 2 514 16 91 / info@oits-isto.org – www.oits-isto.org.

Serviço Social do Comércio (SESC SP) - Av. Alvaro Ramos, 991 – CEP 03331-000 São Paulo SP – Brésil
Tel : + 55 11 2607 8000 – Fax : + 55 11 2607 8080 – www.sescsp.org.br.

