In 2004, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), recognized by the UN General Assembly in resolution 58/232 [YUN 2003, p. 1475] as a specialized agency of the United Nations, continued to play a central role in promoting responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, with particular attention to the interests of developing countries. In its first year as a UN agency, UNWTO established links with similar organizations and sought to better align its work programme with UN strategies and campaigns.

The UNWTO General Assembly, its governing body, did not meet in 2004; its sixteenth session was scheduled to be held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2005. The UNWTO Executive Council, which met between Assembly sessions, held its seventy-third (Hyderabad, India, 8-9 July) and seventy-fourth (Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, 2-3 December) sessions. Other meetings of UNWTO organs convened in 2004 included a supplementary meeting of the Commission of the Americas (Costa Rica, October), a meeting of the Strategic Group (Monaco, October) and the second meeting of the Quality Support and Trade Committee (Madrid, Spain, November). During the year, UNWTO also organized a Tourism Policy Forum, in cooperation with the George Washington University, Washington, D.C., and a meeting among the tourism-related agencies and programmes of the UN system, designed to improve coordination among them.

World Tourism Day was commemorated on 27 September under the theme “Sport and tourism; two living forces for mutual understanding, culture and social development”.

As at 31 December 2004, UNWTO comprised 144 member States, seven associate members and over 300 affiliate members, representing the private sector, educational institutions and destination management organizations.

Activities

One of UNWTO’s main areas of focus in 2004 was a programme designed to develop sustainable tourism as a force for eliminating poverty, as part of its commitment to contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals [YUN 2000, p. 51]. The programme, known as the Sustainable Tourism—Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) initiative, which was first launched at the World Summit for Sustainable Development [YUN 2002, p. 821] in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), was unanimously supported by the fifteenth UNWTO General Assembly in 2003.

In 2004, the UNWTO ST-EP Foundation was established in Seoul, Republic of Korea, as an institution aimed at encouraging international cooperation on sustainable tourism development for poverty elimination. Some $500,000 remaining from the execution of past technical cooperation activities was allocated to new projects within the Foundation’s framework.

The World Committee on Tourism Ethics, established by the UNWTO Assembly in 2003 as an independent body to assist in implementing and monitoring the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, at its second meeting (Madrid, Spain, 4-5 October), adopted its rules of procedure and guidelines relative to the dispute settlement procedure. A report on the Committee’s work regarding the implementation of the Code was considered by the Executive Council, which met twice during the year (see above). Italy offered to host the Committee headquarters in Rome.

Other UNWTO activities addressed issues relating to cooperation for development, in terms of transferring tourism know-how to developing countries; quality in tourism development, with regard to measures to improve the design and supply of tourism products and services; sustainable tourism development, designed to ensure that the benefits of tourism could be enjoyed for generations; statistics, involving the provision of facts and figures that demonstrated the economic impact of tourism; market intelligence, in terms of identifying market trends, forecasting, research and analysis of key market issues and evaluation tools for promotional campaigns; human resource development, particularly regarding the preparation of professionals for leadership roles in the tourism sector of UNWTO member countries; and communications and documentation, in terms of increasing awareness of the importance of the tourism industry and related media activities.

Regional activities to strengthen and support national tourism were undertaken by UNWTO in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and Europe.
During the year, UNWTO revised its “vision 2020” report, a long-term forecast and assessment of the development of tourism, covering the first 20 years of the new millennium. Based on the revision, a “provisional outlook for 2010” would be prepared.

Secretariat
As at 31 December 2004, UNWTO staff numbered 103, of whom 45 were in the Professional or higher categories and 58 were in the General Service category.

Budget
The UNWTO Executive Council approved a budget of 10,645,000 euros for 2005.