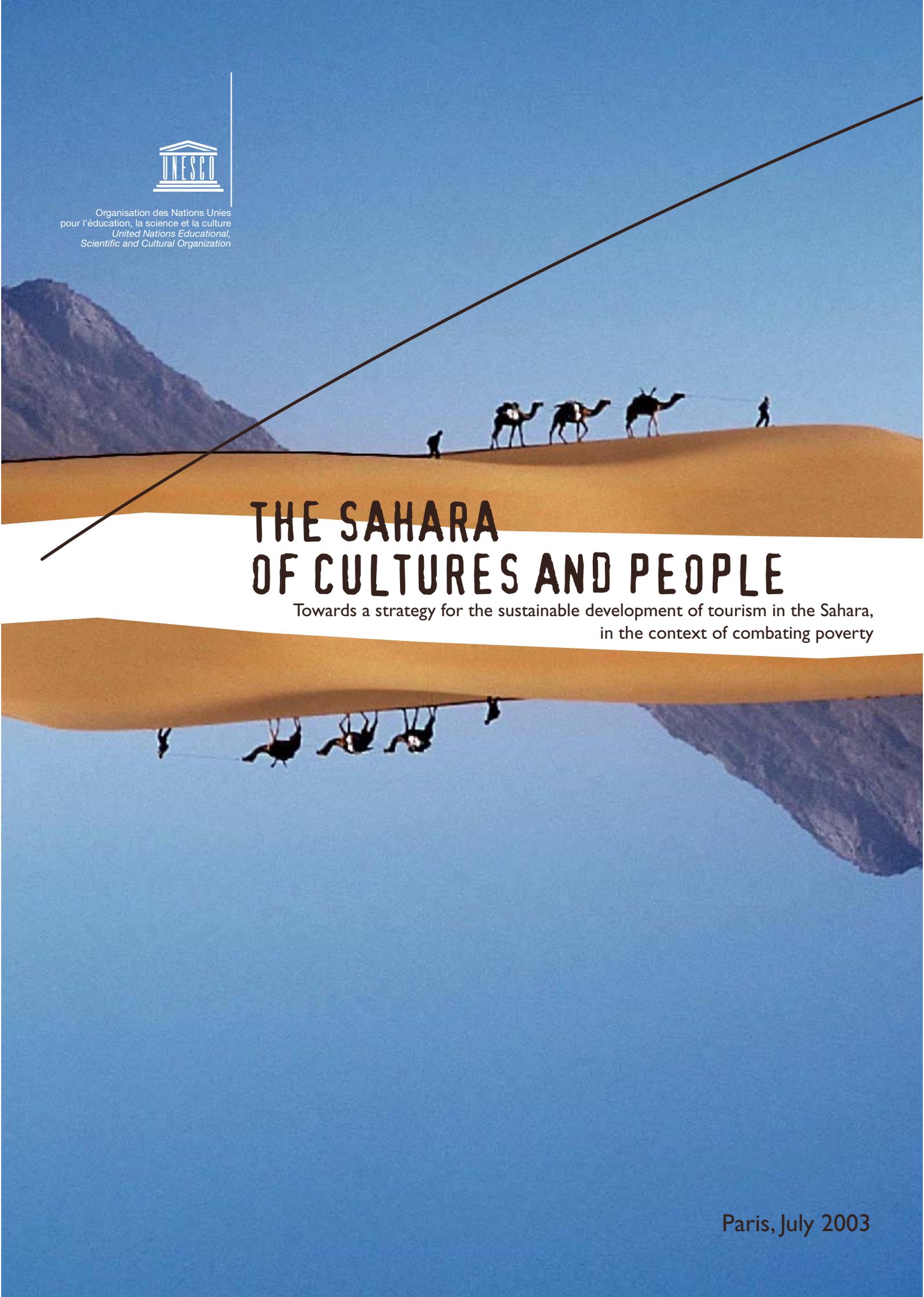




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A photograph of a camel caravan in the Sahara desert. The scene is captured in silhouette against a clear blue sky. A line of camels, led by a person, is walking across a sand dune. The image is split horizontally, with the top half showing the desert and the bottom half showing a mirrored, inverted view of the same scene.

THE SAHARA OF CULTURES AND PEOPLE

Towards a strategy for the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara,
in the context of combating poverty

Paris, July 2003

FOREWORD

The document entitled "Towards a strategy for the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara in the context of poverty eradication" was produced at UNESCO's request by Mr Rachid Sidi Boumedine with the assistance of Ms Laure Veirier on the basis of seven thematic studies and was modified after the international workshop held in Ghardaïa (19-21 April 2003, Algeria).

It follows on from the preliminary study produced by Mr Ezzedine Hosni, "Strategy for sustainable tourism development in the Sahara", (1999) and takes into account the study from G Aumassip on archeological heritage, realised in this framework.

The author is responsible for the choice and presentation of the facts contained in this publication, as well as for the opinions expressed therein which are not necessarily those of UNESCO, and do not commit the Organization.

For further information, please contact

M. Hervé Barré

Project coordinator: Division of Cultural Policies and of Intercultural Dialogue, Culture Sector
UNESCO

1.rue Miollis - 75732 Paris Cedex 15 France

Email : h.barre@unesco.org & sahara@unesco.org

Thematic studies:

- **Mr Giuma Annag:** The tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the face of tourism: how to identify it, preserve it and make it better known more effectively?
- **Ms Hala Barakat:** The natural heritage in the face of tourism: how to identify it, preserve it and make it better known more effectively?
- **Ms Sabrina Benmecheri:** Prospects for the development of tourism, impact on job creation and needs in training and infrastructure in the countries sharing the Sahara.
- **Mr Christophe Leservoier:** The role of tourism professionals and travellers in the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara; what types of travel should be promoted and what sort of professional cooperation with the local populations?
- **Mr Rachid Sidi Boumedine:** The Saharan populations: what measures to be taken to make of tourism a tool for combating poverty?
- **Mr Ahmed Smaoui:** Saharan tourism policies: guiding principles for a strategy of sustainable development and proposals for cooperation measures
- **Ms Ouidad Tebbaa:** The human environment and tourism development: how can local populations be made to participate more effectively?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	06
I. THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE SAHARA: A COMPLEX AND VARIED TERRITORY	09
1. The natural heritage: a vast territory to be protected	10
1.1 The major climatic and physical features of the Sahara	10
1.2 Remarkable biodiversity	11
1.3 Protection measures	13
2. The peoples of the Sahara, a plurality of social organizations	14
2.1 Aridity and population patterns	14
2.2 The tributary system	15
3. The cultural heritage: diversity and fragility	16
3.1 An immense archaeological reserve	16
3.2 The oasis: the human genius in action	17
3.3 A unique intangible cultural heritage	19
4. Poverty: reality with many facets	21
4.1 Poverty beyond the figures: a question of justice and dignity	21
4.2 The poverty trend in deteriorating living conditions	22
4.3 Social status and vulnerability: towards the feminization of poverty	24
4.4 Reconversion and participation: to make tourism instrumental in eradicating poverty	26
5. Saharan tourism: a common field of interest	27
5.1 Policies and tools for tourism development	27
5.2 Tourism trends up to 2010	29
5.3 Organizing visits: for whom, by whom and how?	30
5.4 From accessibility to the dangers of massification	32
5.5 The quality of tourist destinations: a condition for long-term development	33
5.6 Tourism cooperation among the Saharan countries: transfrontier solidarity	34

2. FOR A STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE SAHARA: RECOMMENDATIONS	39
1. Cooperation: a requirement more than a necessity	40
1.1 A matter of effectiveness	40
1.2 The guiding principles of cooperation	42
2. For sustainable Saharan tourism: what action, according to what ethics?	44
2.1 The States and institutions: raising awareness among and providing support for tourism actors	45
2.2 Tour operators: towards an improvement in the quality of products on offer	47
2.3 The hosts: training and structuring	49
2.4 Travellers: quality actors	50
2.5 The host populations: an authentic welcome	50
3. The Saharan natural and cultural heritage: what measures for protecting it and enhancing its value?	51
3.1 General measures	51
3.2 The natural heritage: from the protection to the renewal of resources	52
3.3 Protect and enhance the archaeological heritage	55
3.4 Protect and enhance the value of inhabited sites	56
3.5 Preserve and promote intangible heritage	57
4. Eradication of poverty: strengthening activities which generate social recognition and income	59
4.1 Develop and enhance natural and cultural productions	59
4.2 Participation, training, working in networks: the keys to success	61
CONCLUSION	64
PLAN OF ACTION	65
GHARDAÏA DECLARATION	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY	68
ANNEXES	72

INTRODUCTION

“Sustainable tourism is, first and foremost, a question of people”

Following the appeal launched by the United Nations Secretary General inviting, in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, all specialized agencies to contribute, on a priority basis, to the eradication of poverty and extreme poverty, UNESCO wanted to make its own specific contribution to the elaboration of an appropriate long term strategy to achieve this objective. Within this framework, at its 31st session in November 2001, the General Conference authorized the Director General to implement an Action Plan composed of several projects including the present one in the context of the cross cutting theme eradication of poverty, especially extreme poverty.

UNESCO considers that poverty violates the fundamental rights of the human being and is at the heart of the preoccupations of all societies, the international community and its institutions. The strategies which have been implemented so far have conceptually neglected to give sufficient importance to culture and more generally, to human factors such as “human capacity” deficiencies, the absence of social capital or to vulnerability and to violations of human dignity.

In accordance with the concepts developed by UNESCO, poverty is to be understood in its broad sense, to include economic, social and cultural “exclusion” and lack of access to health care, education, housing, water, that is to say to all the necessities which give a human being the necessary dignity to become an actor of a process which will extricate him from poverty.

The proposed project seeks, through studies and action plans, to enhance UNESCO’s strategy as defined in its medium term plan (C/4) concentrating on:

1. Integrating the struggle against poverty into the strategy for the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara, namely in activities aimed at safeguarding and enhancing the value of the cultural and natural heritage.

2. Reinforcing effective coordination between the ten member States concerned in formulating national strategies to combat poverty and putting into place elements for sustainable development of tourism linked to poverty eradication. This coordination could equally concern those elements aimed at mobilising social capital through capacity building and by developing public institutions, with a view to permitting the poor to exercise their rights.

3. Contributing to putting in place an appropriate framework and environment conducive to the establishment of self governance, participatory approaches and the creation of subsistence means, particularly through professional training and the creation of micro industries in the field of culture, the environment and tourism.

One of the challenges for tourism development in the “South”, and particularly in the Sahara, could be to maintain a certain level of the sale price of tourist products to enable international tourism to function as an instrument of growth and for combating poverty. This argument is largely based on the “2002 report on LDCs” by UNCTAD⁽¹⁾.

The tourist resource of the Sahara which is of interest in this project, i.e. its cultural and natural heritage, possesses the double characteristic of not being “displacable” and to be currently very much in demand in the context of a global increase in quality tourism and cultural discoveries. In this context, the resource can be sufficiently appreciated and help the development of the countries in question.

This approach is favoured by the trends observed in the evolution of tourism which present favourable conditions to seek development with a view to poverty eradication. Indeed, as highlighted by G. Cazes⁽²⁾: “at the global level, it is the irresistible increase in destinations of the developing countries of the South which should be strongly emphasised: a scrupulous country by country analysis shows that countries of the Third World currently receive almost a third (31.5 % in 1995) of world arrivals as compared with only a sixth (17%) in the seventies and a twelfth (8%) in 1960.”

(1) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

(2) In his contribution to the collective work “Tourism Ethics and Development” Editions l’Harmattan, 2001, p98

The same author remarks that⁽¹⁾ “for countries of the South, the revenues obtained from tourist arrivals correspond to almost three times the amount of public development Aid.”

When well-managed, tourism can have positive economic spin-offs for the populations through direct jobs created in the tourism services and also through indirect jobs which tourism generates by enhancing and developing natural and cultural production activities, which are so varied in the Sahara.

The demand for new horizons, space, silence, and travel which has a meaning, is enjoying growing enthusiasm among increasingly urbanized populations which live in noisy environments. The countries which share the Sahara have become aware of this incredible wealth of resources which Saharan tourism represents: the rich cultural and natural heritage, the proximity of Europe, the leading world tourist market. In view of the forecasts regarding tourism growth in this subregion, the challenge is to anticipate tourist flows, particularly in fragile sites, to ward off any negative sociocultural and environmental effects and to help the States which share the Sahara to make of tourism a lever for development and an instrument for combating poverty.

Furthermore, Saharan tourism is not any ordinary form of tourism. It is the context which matters first and foremost in the Sahara. What the tourist enjoys is essentially symbolic as the initial emotion is that of observing people and things and sampling silence and immensity. Saharan tourism provides travellers with an opportunity to experience forms of remoteness and exoticism that are closely tied to the original quality of the places they visit (dunes, vast expanses and silence) or living human production activities (dwellings, cultures, arts and crafts and lifestyles) or the remnants of vestiges (engravings, paintings and ruins, etc.).

What this means is that tourism is directly affected by the preservation if not the rehabilitation of the original context, whether natural or cultural. It is undoubtedly one of the most interesting aspects of such tourism. It can act as a lever to increase the production of goods, whether material or symbolic, without such goods being exclusively focused on tourists. Consequently, tourism cannot be seen purely as a single activity (subject to monetary fluctuations and unforeseen national and international crises and events) but should be viewed within the context of a more global approach to development whose durability rests on maintaining and strengthening natural and cultural diversity. The quality of services, the enhancement of local natural and cultural resources and the awareness of all the actors concerned of the importance of preserving the tangible and intangible heritage are all major paths of activity to be implemented.

Accordingly, the development of Saharan tourism raises a number of questions to which we shall attempt to provide answers:

- *How can tourism be developed in the Saharan countries while contributing to safeguarding the environment and to protecting the cultural heritage?*
- *How can socio-economic development generated by tourism be reconciled with the management of natural and human resources with a view to the sustainable management of ecosystems?*
- *How can an optimal distribution of the benefits of tourism be ensured and what measures should be taken to guarantee its contribution to the elimination of the poverty which threatens part of the Saharan population?*

The proposed recommendations contributing to respond to these questions will require national consultation in order to adapt the measures to local specificities and will be implemented through cooperation with partners in the public and private sector and civil society, in the spirit of sustainability of development, inspired by the principles and conclusions of the World Summit on Eco-Tourism held in Quebec, Canada (19-22 May 2002) and the Rio+10 Summit on sustainable development held in Johannesburg (26 August - 4 September 2002) and the WTO global code of ethics on tourism.

(1) Ibid. p107

PART ONE

THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE SAHARA: A complex and varied territory

1. THE NATURAL HERITAGE: A VAST TERRITORY TO BE PROTECTED

Is it possible through the scientific descriptions of the Sahara, however objective and comprehensive they might be, to give an accurate description of the beauty of its landscapes, the grandiose and magnificent character of its endless spaces and its profound silences? No description of the geology of the Tassili, the Akakus or the Tibesti could possibly describe the implacable savagery of the forces which have fashioned its rocks, the palette of colours and their combinations that change with light. Can there be a more intense, more luminous green than that of the oasis which welcomes the weary and dusty traveller? Can there be anything more heart-warming than tea beside the fire?

In contrast with generally accepted ideas, the Sahara cannot be simply summed up as a vast and varied territory. Can we imagine a territory of some 8 million square kilometres without evidence of occasionally significant variations in morphological terms, in landscape and in wildlife?

The fact is frequently overlooked that the Sahara, in purely altimetric terms, comprises both depressions whose altitude is below sea level and uplands that exceed 3,000 metres. Similarly, the Sahara is a subregion that extends from the Red Sea to the East as far as the Atlantic in the most western part of Africa.

1.1. The major climatic and physical features of the Sahara

A summary description of the Sahara and, more particularly, the broad outline of its hydrology, sheds light on its population patterns, history and forms of human settlement (whether sedentary or nomadic).

Various criteria have been used to define the desert: the scarcity of rain (rainfall ranging from 100 to 200 mm), the flora (to the north, the outer limit of palm trees, while to the south, the appearance of cram-cram grass), while retaining a number of other features such as the disorganized pattern of hydrography, the concentration of perennial plant life in drainage channels and the mobility of sand dunes, which are in constant displacement

While, on the one hand, mechanisms on a planetary scale maintain such aridity, this is either reinforced or weakened by local factors such as the degree of evaporation, the permeability of soils (sand, sandstone and rock) and also the relief of the terrain, whether there are depressions or not that facilitate the accumulation, drainage or infiltration of rainwater. Such aridity becomes extreme (hyperaridity) in places where the absence of any significant relief exposes water to extremely rapid evaporation (all the rainwater in some instances) or to its disappearance without any effect.

Nevertheless, there is groundwater trapped in rocks during early periods of rainfall (so-called humid periods), the most familiar examples of which are those of the continental limestone stratum that extends from western Algeria (Touat) as far as Libya (800,000 km²), the Mourzouk basin (700,000 km²) and beyond to the Haroudj (Libya), a basin of some 1.75 million km² (the smallest reservoir being that of Taoudeni with 250,000 km²).

In point of fact, it would seem that the formation of valleys in the past is likely to facilitate the collection of rainwater today and to produce floodwater (sources of accumulation and vegetation) where annual rainfall is less than 200 ml (Tassili, M'zab) whereas in certain areas of Mauritania (Adrar, Tagout and Assaba), the average annual rainfall of 100 mm disappears to no effect.

The geological history of the continent must also be borne in mind to understand a number of phenomena, particularly the remarkable persistence of wildlife which would not, in principle, be assimilated to that of a "desert".

The Sahara rests both to the east and the west on the remains of the African shield, the craters that belonged to the original continent (the Gondwana); its central area is an accumulation of sediments deposited during a succession of dry and wet periods – on the scale of the geological ages – which accounts largely for current phenomena linked to its last period of desertification.

In fact, to put it simply, the major water courses of the Sahara owe their existence – and their survival – merely to the fact that they draw most of their water from the equatorial regions.

These gigantic supplies of water constitute the only means whereby the Nile can force its way towards the Mediterranean and not disappear in the interior delta of Bahr El Ghazal, whereas the Senegal and Niger rivers, victims like the Nile of very slight gradients which limit their flow, manage to go beyond their internal deltas with great difficulty to reach the sea, which is not the case of the Chari.

The hardness of the upland relief considerably limited any hollowing out, thereby creating areas without any significant relief, without depressions whereby water could accumulate or drain away. These correspond to the most arid parts of the Sahara (Egypt, Libya and Mauritania).

Conversely, in the central area, floodwater originating from rainfall on the uplands (Atlas, Hoggar, Tassili and Tibesti), which created more or less vast permanent valleys, sometimes even within impermeable rocks, enabled the formation of permanent groundwater and gueltas (lakes).



1.2. Remarkable biodiversity

The complex interplay of rainfall, its regularity and amplitude, and the nature of the rock formations with various degrees of erosion, introduce patterns of regularity in major areas, but also considerable variability in local practical climatic conditions with effects on wildlife.

There is evidence of two main typical forms: an extensive form corresponding to vast stretches of vegetation subject to the hazards of rainfall and possible flooding, and limited forms corresponding to the permanent presence of water in places displaying specific conditions.

• Extensive forms:

By that we refer to the very extensive plains or plateaux (such as the Aïr or the Tamesna in Niger) which benefit from tropical rains coming from the Gulf of Guinea, on the one hand, and which are irrigated by floods from the Hoggar and the Tassili, on the other hand.

What is distinctive about these areas is that they contain a vast variety of (leguminous, grasses, and Tamaricaceae, etc.) species of enormous ecological value covering herbaceous, bushy and arborescent strata including the famous acacia as well as the tamarisk.

The phenomenon of forward and backward seasonal movement of pastures in accordance with rainfall, and the transport of pollen and seeds by animals or by the wind, have made of these expanses a link between the savannah of the Sahel and the central Sahara.

As a consequence, the fauna itself comprises wild terrestrial mammals of many species. There is evidence of small animals such as the hedgehog, the hare (from the Sudan to the Atlantic), the gerbil, the jird, the desert rat and, naturally, the jackal, the hyena, the fox and the wildcat, without omitting the Addax, the Doreas gazelle and wild donkey at the confines of the Tibesti-Ennedi, at Djarabas, and on the borders of Eritrea.

As regards reptiles, there is evidence of the varan, the agama, the viper, the cobra, the mamba and various species of amphibians. More prestigious animals such as the leopard, a symbol of the Kenyan savannah, are also present as traces of them can be found as far as the Hoggar.

The case of birds is more complex as they can be classified into sedentary and migratory species, which are either hibernating or summering. Most of them are protected species and can be found on the IUCN lists. Some of the species are threatened with extinction such as the bustard and the ostrich in the Northern Sahara.

Threats to the biotopes and biocenoses are increasing mainly because of lasting droughts. The resulting reduction in the biomass has an effect on the survival of large-sized herbivorous species which need larger food rations. It therefore has an indirect consequence for carnivorous species.

As regards the domestic flora, we were able to observe how the insalubrious nature of oases established around waterholes, gueltas and sophisticated water-collection systems, has been the origin of quite singular developments.

As regards the fauna, the threats are of a similar kind and scale. The current state of the domestic fauna reflects a deterioration in human living conditions and the consequences of competition that prevails in the modern world. Wild fauna is suffering from the consequences of the deterioration of the biomass (through drought), a reduction in areas of habitat (biotopes and biocenoses), as well as anthropic action whether direct (hunting and poaching) or indirect (destruction of the environment and pollution).

Therefore, in the face of the reduction in numbers, if not the extinction, of certain species, the measures would seem to be similar, namely to protect and rehabilitate the environment and to facilitate the reproduction of species, including through breeding.

The anthropic threat is no less dangerous in absolute terms but also through the worsening effects of natural threats. These include the cutting of wood for fuel (in addition to common essences, certain rare specimens that date back hundreds of years), overgrazing around waterholes (some of which have been bored without any preliminary study and without evaluation of their impact) and, lastly, poaching for food but also for selling.



• Limited forms:

These can be either man-made waterholes (foggara oases), or springs or natural water collection spots (gueltas) in low-lying land, more usually along lines of depression.

The remarkable feature of these places is that they are the location of micro-climates resulting from the conjunction of a multitude of factors which have not only enabled particular species (both vegetable and animal) to develop, but have also ensured the conservation going back to very early times of species (fish and amphibians) which would otherwise have disappeared.

This peculiarity is accentuated by the insular nature of these spots. The plant species, for example, whether spontaneous or cultivated by humans, now have specific if not singular genetic features in terms of both their adaptation to a micro-context and their nutritional qualities.

This suggests that it is not enough to distinguish between the oases in the Libyan depression from those in Chad, Mauritania, the Algerian Tidikelt or the Tiassili by the fact that they belong to specific environments, which are different from each other. It must also be emphasized that each of these oases is, in itself, a reservoir of specific genetic potential.

Accordingly, various types of wheat, dates and fruit trees (peaches and figs) come from very ancient strains and have developed – without external influence – in these confined areas to the point where they have become typical of such areas alone, which renders them attractive – and enhances their reputation – in local trade.

I.3. Protection measures

All the countries which share the Sahara have taken measures to safeguard the environment and the natural heritage in particular (wetlands, forests, biodiversity, the struggle against desertification, etc.). These measures apply to:

- *Entire territories considered as veritable reservoirs, on a subcontinental scale, of animal and vegetable natural resources of special interest. Protection methods are taken either at national level (nature parks, integrated reserves) or at international level (World Heritage⁽¹⁾, biosphere reserves). This involves very extensive territories as much as smaller ones such as wetlands (marshes, lagoons, lakes, gueltas and estuaries) which are protected under the Ramsar Convention.*
- *Species, particularly animals, endangered by a reduction in the biomass (drought) or in their territory, often on account of human occupation. In that case, in addition to legislation aimed at safeguarding any particular species, protection zones have been created with various requirements (nature reserves, hunting reserves, integrated reserves, etc.).*

Obviously, structured entities (parks) require States to provide more means in terms of staff, equipment and funds. In spite of such difficulties, most of the States have signed and ratified the international conventions⁽²⁾ and implemented rehabilitation and protection projects with the assistance of international bodies or certain countries. National and local associations for the protection of the environment are playing an increasingly important part in the ten Saharan countries.

(1) See Annex 2.

(2) See Annex 3.

2. THE PEOPLES OF THE SAHARA, A PLURALITY OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

2.1. Aridity and population patterns

In the Sahara, forms of settlement have always been closely linked to the availability of resources indispensable for human life, their level and their precarity within a globally arid context. The variety of their adaptation to local physical contexts provides a clear illustration, throughout prehistory and history, of the capacity of the human genius to fashion this hostile environment and to imprint his culture on it. The forms of social organization born of the desert and in the desert are also closely linked to how desert resources (water and land) are exploited and their value enhanced.

Nevertheless, human achievements and this environment are now under a twofold threat, through the action of human beings who attempt to draw on local resources to meet their most immediate needs and by the ups and downs of the climate which cause long periods of drought. In places where the presence of underground water resources has for long enabled the existence of sedentary settlements, it is overexploitation of such a resource that now constitutes the greatest threat to the fragile oasis ecosystem. The semi-nomadic life is now threatened by the increased scarcity of rainfall and plant cover.

Between the growing demand for resources and the capacities of the environment, there is a whole range of delicate balances that can be achieved. Imbalances generate migrations towards the cities, towards regions or neighbouring countries that are better off, outside Africa or towards other continents. Some of the resulting population flows continue to use the main routes which were traced over centuries by the caravans. Not only did caravans facilitate the exchange of goods between the Sahel and the Maghreb and even Europe, they also conveyed the cultural and religious values and permitted alliances and intermixing, the traces of which are still present today.

In those areas where they existed, durable resources made sedentary life and agriculture possible, whereas those regions that depended particularly on seasonal rainfall came to be the territories preferred by nomads. These two dominant forms of population nurtured relations of objective solidarity or, at least, complementarity.

It is commonly recognized that the present-day Sahara experienced a period of significant humidity, as proved by traces of plant or animal origin as well as vestiges of human activity during the prehistoric and proto-historic periods, before undergoing a process of gradual desertification (during which increasingly marked periods of humidity and drought alternated) bringing about the desert conditions as we know them today.

As the central part of the Sahara gradually turned into desert – as the so-called arid period is continuing today – sedentary life gave way to semi-nomadic and nomadic lifestyles. Nevertheless, the peoples which provided a link in historic times between the two outer boundaries of the Sahara acted as guides and escorts for the commercial caravans and, quite logically, followed the paths marked out by the availability of watering holes, namely westwards via the Touat and the Saoura, and towards the centre via the Tassili (east and west routes).

This North-South movement was combined with two East-West movements. To the North, this involved caravans heading from Egypt towards Tripolitania in order to link up with the North-South axes and, in the central area, trade between the oases of Touat and Tidikelt and the Hoggar-Tassili region.

The gradual drying up process made farmers retreat towards the lacustrine basins of the southern Sahara, while the North developed its agriculture around the oases. These human settlements, that were made viable through the presence of water in the depressions, marked out the caravan routes.

The current population distribution reflects both the occupation of the territory and the division of labour between farmers or stockbreeders and nomads, with occupation of northern Sahara by Semitic peoples, the Sahel by Sudanese populations and the centre, as a link, by the Hamite (Touareg) populations.

2.2. The tributary system

The origins of the African populations have been widely recorded and classified (Berbers, Arabs and Sudanese). Nevertheless, given the considerable intermixing of populations and the resulting interbreeding, the continent now presents a picture of complex reality in which each local community claims to belong to such and such an ethnic group, sometimes in spite of language and customs.

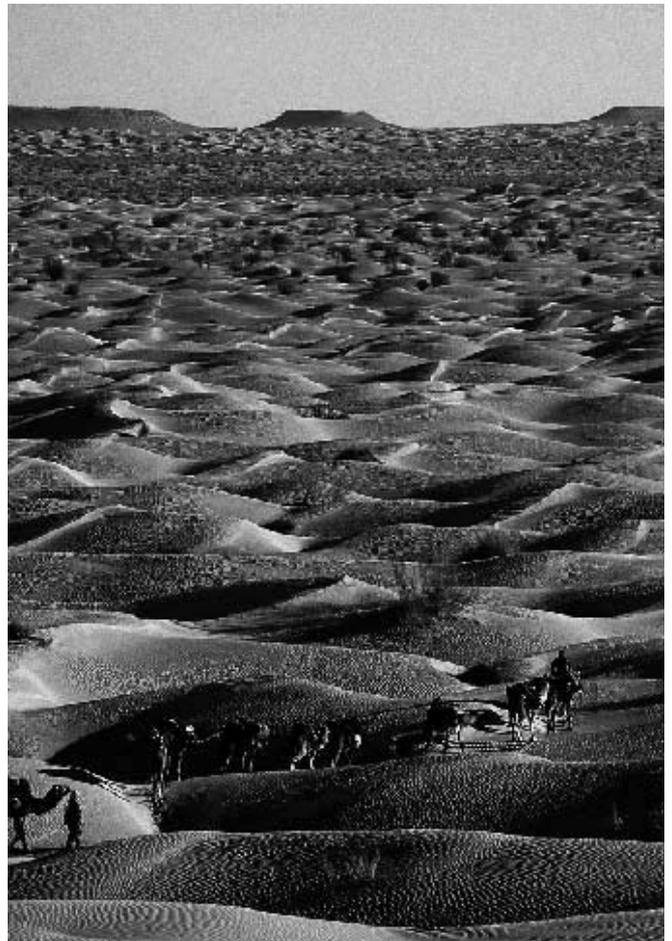
This myth of supposed origin clearly illustrates the permanence and importance of the notion of belonging to a particular filiation and, therefore, to those of a dominant patriarchal nature that pertain in African societies. Whether or not an individual belongs to a leading lineage or is affiliated to such a group, according to customs of allegiance and co-optation, determines the place of that individual in his or her community.

Accordingly, food producers give over part of what they produce to the leadership, the members of whom receive by right a share of that tribute, according to their position in or around the dominant lineage. In return, the producers are assured of their protection.

The practical manifestation of this protection is to be found in sedentary settlements through the existence of the Ksar (the casbah or ribat, terms which translate the notion of fortification) or through the fact that the "noble" leaders are also warriors in the nomadic societies (Tuaregs, Chaanbi and Moors, etc.) who, furthermore, provide protection to the oases (populated by farmers) situated within their territory.

In contrast, the producers occupy inferior positions in the social hierarchy. They are often called Harratin (from the singular Har-tani, that is to say a second-ranking free man, an emancipated slave, etc.) or Iklan (singular Akli) governed by the Chorfas or Imajeghen ("freemen" in the Berber language). The governing lineage controls the main resource, water, and its corollaries, cultivable land and pastures, while the forms of "domination-possession" are variable.

It was the specific nature of what was produced in the Sahelian South (gold, copper, pelts and livestock) and the North (wheat, dates, salt, etc.) which provided the basis for regular caravan traffic over several centuries (until the early twentieth century) and facilitated, through the stability of commercial networks, the expansion of Islam into the Sahel, inter-ethnic alliances (including those by marriage) and the birth of a Saharan culture, both common and diverse.



3. THE CULTURAL HERITAGE: DIVERSITY AND FRAGILITY

It may seem paradoxical to expect to develop tourism based essentially on the strange nature of places, if not the calm and tranquillity that their emptiness has to offer, with a view to reducing the poverty of populations whose presence may not even amount to 0.5 inhabitants per km².

In contrast with generally accepted ideas, the Sahara is literally teeming with archaeological remains without taking account of the many human establishments that are remarkable as much by the fact that their existence would seem to be miraculous as by that of the variety of forms and colours of the dwellings and architecture.

What then can be said of the products of craft industries, songs, dances and religious or secular ceremonies? The Sahara, in fact, possesses a cultural heritage that is diverse, rich and unique. In more prosaic terms, scientists classify objects and sites designated as the site of a significant accumulation of evidence, whether they belong to archaeology, history or culture.

The products of arts and crafts have a material, utilitarian, decorative and symbolic nature which raises problems of distinguishing between the meaning and scope of customs, rituals and their use. Songs and dances, in addition to their aesthetic nature, also strengthen the social or community group in asserting its identity and cohesion.

Accordingly, we are in the presence of communities which have had in the past, as proved by archaeology, and still have, an art of living and a way of life. Body movements, places, utilitarian objects and specific moments in time are all permanently interrelated, thereby depicting populations in all their rich diversity as well as their fragility.

3.1. An immense archaeological reserve

The appearance of man (*Homo erectus*) dates back approximately 1.5 million years and there is evidence of prehistoric man throughout the Sahara. The wide variety of tools dating back to the Palaeolithic Age would suggest that the Sahara has been inhabited by humans for more than two million years. The neolithic Sahara experienced, in the sixth millennium, prodigious development of livestock-breeding of which a panorama of engravings and paintings on the rocks of central Sahara provide splendid testimony.

The potential value of these archaeological resources is largely underestimated firstly because it has not been sufficiently studied and, secondly, as the results of research providing information on migration patterns, climatic change, human activity and landscapes has not been disseminated to the public at large.



The sites are innumerable, but mention can be made of a few such as:

- *Fayum, Kharga, Gilf Kebir in Egypt;*
- *Akakus, Teshuinat, Ghat, Messak, Germa in Libya;*
- *Ahaggar, Serkout, Tassili N'ajjer, Meddak, Iherir, Tihodaine in Algeria;*
- *Jencien, Mennachia in Tunisia;*
- *Sidi Boulenouar and Tamanar in Morocco;*
- *Ounjougou, Adrara Iforas, Tanaradant and Eghaghar in Mali;*
- *Air, Ténéré, Kaouar and Djado, and Termit in Niger;*
- *Tibesti and Ennedi in Chad;*
- *Ouanat, Kerkur Talh and Wadihowar in Sudan.*

The archaeological heritage is by essence non-renewable. Nevertheless it has been dilapidated, misunderstood and often remains little more than an object of curiosity. Its deterioration is due to natural factors (very gradual deterioration, wind and water erosion and light laying the objects bare) and anthropic factors: the removal and subsequent disappearance of key objects for understanding the territory, the trampling of the ground and deterioration of the walls, the fragilization and frittering away of the rock, the displacement of objects, all leading to the destruction of the sites and the dilapidation of knowledge. The attraction for the Sahara and the efforts provided to develop cultural tourism must therefore be accompanied at all costs by measures to ensure the identification, interpretation, safeguarding and management of the archaeological sites.

3.2. The oasis: the human genius in action

Skills, and particularly traditional know-how in coping with a hostile environment that is scarce in resources, appeared in the development of techniques enabling water (and land) to be used more judiciously, whether available permanently or cyclically.

In sedentary establishments, the quest for protection against wind and sun extended to the design of architecture and town-planning in which technical solutions, ranking as an art, lent a specific aesthetic dimension to dwellings and the urban fabric. Regardless of the variety of forms or formal architectural styles – which gave regions their special identity – the same guiding principles were always implemented.

On account of the arid climate of the Sahara, it was the groundwater reserves which made up the main source of oases. The actual location of oases took account of the possible combination of three factors, namely the level of the groundwater and the method of drawing on it, the presence of cultivable alluvial soils and protection against the wind and heat.

The combination of the last two factors often led to choosing the edge of depressions while water could be pumped (pendulum wells and norias) or collected and distributed by gravitation through conduits (foggaras) when it was located at a higher altitude than that of the chosen site. In the latter case, the most striking example by its size, the number of structures (900), and the length of the tunnels (up to 14 km at Timimoun), is that which is to be found in the Touat, Gourara and Tidikelt. Similar installations are to be found at Ouarzazate and Ghadames.

In some oases, it was the combination of several solutions that was adopted according to the actual availability of water (whether in the water table or through river flooding): reservoir dams and derivation dams (in the foothills of the Upper Atlas and the Saharan Atlas) combined with artesian wells (M'zab and Djerba), submersion (Saourra, Adrar des Iforas) combined with dams (Goulimine) or animal traction and pendulum wells (Fezzan).

The next task was then to distribute the water according to shares governed by geometry (that of the ksairiates, the width of the indentation which regulated the flow) or by periods of drainage of the common seguia which brought water to the various plots of land.

The architecture of the oases was not remarkable for its use of local materials (clay or stone) used in their raw state (Ouzarzazate, Timbuktu, Timimoun and Adrar) or painted (M'zab and Djerba) but by virtue of the fact that it used the palm tree to advantage.

It also provided a lesson in bioclimatic habitat for several reasons: the adoption of thick walls, the structuring of space to enable an adequate flow of air through convection by the chebek which dominated the central patio (wast ad dar).

The width of the streets and alleyways obeys a strict hierarchy aimed at enabling animals whether laden or not to pass each other; the central square, patios and access ways were designed according to a human scale. The broken line of the passages and streets, making way here or there for covered passages play a part in creating shadows and obstacles to the passage of the wind, thereby creating areas of coolness and giving to the Ksar as a whole the same bioclimatic features as the dwellings that make it up.

When all is said and done, without wanting to oppose it to modern architecture which has claimed its own standards, the proportions of this type of architecture are based on the scale of human beings and their community, governed according to a succession of hierarchies in the various spaces that extend from domestic intimacy to the public thoroughfare.

The palm grove, in the way it is designed and how it operates, contributes fundamentally to this fragile oasis ecosystem. Earthwork conducted according to a series of stages from the water level, the cultivated terraces up to the level of the palm trees via that of the fruit trees, provides proof of the existence of a cooler local microclimate and the existence of exchanges by convection which maintain specific temperature and humidity levels beneath the canopy of the palm trees.

In biological terms, the cycle of exchanges between humans, plants, animals and the soil maintains the presence of organic waste which in turn serves as a nutrient to the soil through components that nurture its fertility.

"A plea for the oases"

Oases are under serious threat and their development is faced with a variety of obstacles:

- *climatic deterioration: the intensification of drought and its consequences on the availability of water;*
- *the discrepancy between demographic pressure and urbanization in relation to the capacity of ecosystems;*
- *the maladjustment of oasis-based operators in regard to economic activities (tourism services, commercial circuits);*
- *modifications in lifestyles and consumption patterns to the detriment of local craft industries;*
- *the absence of any change in legislation on land, water and methods of exploitation;*
- *geographical isolation and remoteness;*
- *the absence of adequate attention being given to the specific nature of oasis conditions in public policies, particularly in the fields of research, agriculture, education and continuing education.*

RADDO (Réseau Associatif de Développement Durable des Oasis)



3.3.A unique intangible cultural heritage

The living heritage is composed of practices that are the result of slow, patient adaptation to the hostility of the environment and the scarcity of its resources. It also comprises representations and images of the human self and of the world devised through such permanent confrontation.

In fact, confrontation with nature and the delicate balance that results from it is the very source of a precious intangible heritage for the identity and integrity of the populations.

Assuming that an order or hierarchy is possible, there is, first and foremost, the cosmogony, vision and explanation of the world which a religion (Islam, in this case) provides regarding man's *raison d'être*, his passage on earth, his future and the paths he must follow.

On this network is superposed that which describes nature and its secrets, particularly those whereby it can show that man lives or dies, the layout of sites in a sensitive universe, the places to avoid or to explore, and the occasionally deadly splendour of open spaces. Is there not a soul, a spirit, that resides within them?

While the initiation rites and the ceremonies they give rise to reflect the importance granted to symbolic access to such awareness, they are also an opportunity to reassert the roots of the social group and its claims to fame. Consequently, poetry, rhyming verse, song and instrumentation are the means of perpetuating the collective memory and its identity, in the absence of written works.

The intangible heritage thereby encompasses the most fundamental aspects of an identity culture and a living tradition: oral traditions, customs, languages, music, dance, rituals, festivities, traditional medicine and pharmacopoeia, the culinary arts, traditional skills (tools and dwellings) and arts and crafts.

The latter are given expression by a series of objects of tangible culture (musical instruments, masks and costumes, etc.) often produced by skilled craftsmen who owe their know-how and the techniques used to their transmission from generation to generation; the art and manner of producing them are intangible.

The thousands of manuscripts deposited in the family libraries of Chinguetti, Ouadane, Tichit and Oualâta (Mauritania) reflect the intense intellectual activity of the Sahara since the Middle Ages and the wealth of knowledge conveyed by the caravans (the Quranic sciences, the history of the art of calligraphy, astronomy and medicine, etc.). The Mauritanian Institute for Scientific Research (Nouakchott) has preserved 6,000 of these ancient documents, half of which are now on microfilm. Since these manuscripts were classified by UNESCO as part of the cultural heritage of humanity, in 1989, the Mauritanian Government and the international community have encouraged the drawing up of an inventory, the restoration and reproduction of as many of those documents as possible while leaving this heritage in the hands of its owners.

In the face of globalization, modernization and the introduction of new technologies, this minority, which is the custodian of the knowledge of its forebears, has become marginalized, is disappearing and is now threatened by new transformations in the economy. The passing on of the know-how of the ancestors who acquired outstanding expertise in their culture has been interrupted by these new social processes (globalization, tourism and the commercialization of culture) which threaten authenticity and tradition in order to put forward innovation and exoticism.

The rituals and festivals celebrated in these regions have all the more importance insofar as they were supported by songs, customs, traditional jewellery and culinary specialties produced by "archivists" who were the custodians of their specific skills. The oral tradition, languages, spirituality, rites, music, poetry, dance, trading styles, arts and crafts and know-how (building, weaving and engraving), cookery, hunting, medical practices and environmental knowledge (astrology, landmarks, etc.) made up an essential part of the Saharan cultural heritage.



Africa's linguistic heritage is one of the richest in the world with 30% of the world's languages. It is, however, one of the most threatened. According to the atlas published by UNESCO, among the 1,400 or more languages spoken on the continent, between 500 and 600 are in jeopardy and 250 are even likely to disappear rapidly. The linguistic situation in Africa, and particularly in the Saharan regions, remains one of the least familiar to specialists who for many years have not been able to gain access to entire regions on account of various factors specific to each country but, above all, the lack of safety that prevailed there.

To go even further...

Nevertheless, on close examination of the various legislations which are meant to protect this intangible heritage, a common feature comes to light in all of those regions, namely that there is no clear reference to the heritage to be protected which is not clearly identified and consequently rarely well defined. It is obvious that when the situation is observed in the field, the definition of intangible heritage has only been partially explored.

Enhancing the value of the heritage, whether natural or cultural, means that the bodies in charge of that task should have a number of inventories, archaeological maps and vegetation maps at their disposal. (An archaeological inventory has become particularly important in the Saharan area since GPS came into use.)

For example, it is on the basis of an early inventory of a region such as the Tadrat, seen until then as a remote area devoid of interest for understanding prehistoric events, that it came to be perceived as a frontier at the end of Palaeolithic times and a crossroads during the Neolithic Age.

Research on prehistory has been conducted in a coherent fashion in the oasis of Farafra, the wadi Howar, the region of Taoudeni, the south of the Hodh and the Tagant, the south of the Tijirit, the oceanic shore, the valley of the Saoura, the lower Sahara, the Tefedest, the southern Tassili n'Ajjer and the Akakus. In point of fact, such research has been very limited and only occasional, more often than not without any particular links, resulting in the fragmentation of data and somewhat hazardous conclusions.

As in the case of natural sites, the fauna and flora are threatened by drought and anthropic aggression. Cultural sites, too, have not been spared degradation due to a lack of knowledge of their importance or have simply been the victims of world trends. Implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972, together with that on combating the illicit trafficking of cultural goods adopted by UNESCO in 1970, could contribute to ensuring better protection of this heritage.

The desire to acquire better standards of comfort in new buildings which go hand in hand with the development of urbanization, and competition from new materials combined with the loss of traditional skills are among the factors which have come to jeopardize traditional sites.

What is more serious as it is less visible is the loss of cultural references and know-how, competition from new fashions and new forms of music, the weakening of groups which thereby reduces the use of local languages. They are all threats to the component features of identities. The recognition and enhancement of the value of immemorial knowledge and know-how, together with traditions in their most vigorous forms, constitute a preliminary basis for the protection of Saharan cultures.⁽¹⁾

(1) The Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (11 October 2003) is extending the international corpus of standards in regard to the tangible heritage.

4. POVERTY: REALITY WITH MANY FACETS

The central actors in tourism (excluding the activity of organizations) who give sparkle to visits, either as guides or as tradesmen or hosts, namely all those who produce a human atmosphere, are the inhabitants of the desert. Fascination for the Tuaregs and the “blue men”, and the ceremonies of the Fulani Bororos, among the variety of African peoples and their cultures, are unavoidable aspects of the desert.

The Sahara is not merely a combination of attributes clinically described by specialists; it possesses beauty and magic which its populations, shrouded in their ample veils, contribute to maintaining by their warmth and kindness.

However, while they have all managed to tame the desert and acquired knowledge of it and the accompanying skills and while their societies have been organized with that aim in mind, we cannot overlook the destabilizing effects of change within the world context, which have aggravated the consequences of catastrophic droughts.

The peoples concerned, custodians of fragile authentic treasures and riches, made even more vulnerable by repeated upheavals, are struggling for their survival. The most vulnerable in their midst – women, young people and children – bear the multiple guises of poverty, namely malnutrition, illiteracy, the loss of rights and the loss of self-esteem, a variety of facets which require a sensitive and attentive approach to the problem.

4.1. Poverty beyond the figures: a question of justice and dignity

In view of the peculiar aspects that denote a feeling of being dispossessed and excluded, vigilance is the key word when use is made of statistics on poverty, whether it be in terms of the validity (figures) or in terms of the meaning (relevance) of what we are given to consider as poverty.

First of all, the debate is in no way a scholastic one. According to how we apprehend the issue, solutions diverge totally, if only insofar as they rarely converge. In fact, choosing to assess human poverty in essentially monetary terms (by presupposing that the actual context of life is one of a money-based system and that

there is complete fluidity in the circulation of money) suggests that such compensatory contributions can themselves be measured along the same lines.

Such a definition overlooks the structural – environmental, social and political – causes of poverty, the forms it takes on in a given population or category of population. It is therefore neither homogenous nor invariably comparable, if only because of the threat it brings to bear on survival and the conditions for escaping from this poverty.

But how can this poverty be defined when we recognize that the owner of 100 head of cattle in the Air has living conditions that are seemingly comparable in many ways to those of a person who has only two or three cattle, according to certain criteria for measuring human development? Both individuals have to contend with the absence of access to healthcare, and must endure illiteracy and no ready access to water.

In fact, over and beyond quantitative data, poverty is perhaps an experience, a perception of oneself and of relationships with others. A survey conducted on how the populations of five villages in Niger perceived poverty revealed that out of a sample of 1,363 people, 40% of those questioned referred to dependence on others, 37% mentioned marginalization and 26% referred to restrictions on rights and freedom.

Poverty is therefore felt as a deficiency in material terms (a lack of money, food and clothing, etc.) but also, and in almost as acute terms, as an inability to take any personal initiative. Even more than a denial of rights (“A poor person is someone who has no right to express himself”; “A poor person is someone who can never obtain satisfaction in conflicts where he is opposed to others”), poverty is therefore a “denial of self”, an incapacity to see oneself as an autonomous being, able to act effectively in his immediate environment.

The feeling of dependence is strengthened by that of solitude as a poor person sees himself as someone “without any support”; he has the feeling that he no longer has a sure footing, no roots. Poverty is therefore the consequence of a violent fracture in the chain of solidarity which underpinned the community up to then.

It is with that view in mind and in accordance with the Vienna Declaration adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, June 1993), which defined extreme poverty as a violation of the dignity and rights of the human being and reasserted the principle of the interdependence and indivisibility of such rights, that the struggle against poverty should be seen.

4.2. The poverty trend in deteriorating living conditions

4.2.1. Global factors which hinder the regeneration and safeguarding process:

• Rapid urbanization

Generally speaking, the profile of poverty in the countries which share the Sahara is marked by very considerable heterogeneity, particularly between north and south.

On that basis, the profile of poverty can be sketched out in the countries which share the Sahara, without including it in the broader context of the dangers that threaten both their ecological heritage, their social equilibrium and ultimately their cultural heritage, on the understanding that unprecedented upheavals have affected the age-old lifestyles of those populations.

The process of sedentarization begun several decades ago, the growing difficulties facing Saharan agriculture resulting in widespread impoverishment of most of the rural areas, a massive rural exodus and poorly controlled urban growth are all factors that have contributed to destroying the ancestral equilibrium of those populations.

For several decades now, small oasis towns have attracted not only rural folk from the oases but also nomads who settle there. Such upheavals resulting from ever faster urbanization, for many years, only concerned the north and the centre of the Sahara. From the mid-1950s, prospection for and exploitation of hydrocarbons gave a degree of support to some Saharan towns, with rates exceeding 90% in some regions such as the wilaya of Ghardaïa in Algeria and the baladiyah of Sebha in Libya. Since then, at least 10 towns have 100,000 inhabitants or more (e.g. Laayoune, Béchar, Sebha, Ouargla and Ghardaïa, etc.).

The establishment of the nomadic populations led them to settle on the outskirts of the centres which gradually reached a size that considerably exceeded local availability of water and land, thereby inevitably raising inextricable management problems. This accelerated the urban impetus, marked in particular by massive migratory influxes of rural folk, resulted principally in widening the gap between rural areas and urban conurbations, thereby creating unprecedented social fracture and change, particularly in the towns of the southern Sahara.

Consequently, sites are often isolated, poorly served, even deserted by their inhabitants whereas they need daily maintenance, threatened as they are by an urbanization process which severs links with the natural environment and alters the authenticity of the site.

• *At Ghadamès, the recession in trading and farming activities has led to an exodus towards the new town.*

• *Many Ksours in Mauritania are enclaved, such as the ksar of Ait ben Haddou which is cut off in periods of flooding.*

The older sites are declining whereas new urban fabric is developing without any apparent logic in terms of planning or respect for the architectural tradition that underpins the ancient character of those towns.

• *At the Ksar Ait ben Haddou, 84 families now live in the new village built of breeze blocks. Only three families continue to live in the old town.*

• *In Timbuktu, unbridled urbanization is now threatening public squares and markets and modern buildings have irremediably disrupted the traditional urban layout.*

• *At Djenné, modern buildings are springing up beyond the historic town while the large square around the mosque has been deprived of dwellings.*

• *The dried-up spring at Ghadamès (Libya), desertion of the historic centre of Chinguetti Tichit, Oualata (Mauritania) for the benefit of other areas nearer to water supplies.*

• Economic and cultural change

Such change has brought into question the role of towns and the traditional way they operate. What is required today is access to the means of a modern lifestyle. In the days of earlier independence, the priority of the new centralized States was to enable all the various populations to have access to standards of comfort similar to those of the rest of the country in order to curtail the drift from the countryside. This priority resulted in the creation of conurbations. The disappearance of the caravan routes transformed earlier passing places into isolated sites. New lifestyles and methods of production made equipment, products and means of transport obsolete.

Transhumance has been maintained even though the herds are only tended by shepherds. This particular trend has had very significant repercussions on the plant cover through overgrazing and over an ever wider radius around each "settlement". It has also been a cause of dissension between sedentary nomads and the traditional oasis population on land tenure, as well as between livestock breeders and farmers with regard to the straying of animals.

4.2.2. Factors underlying the degradation of buildings

- *The reduction of plant cover, due to the scarcity of water, is threatening to block sites with sand (some of the Ksour in Mauritania have already been silted up).*
- *Difficulties regarding intervention on land tenure: the complexity linked to rules governing inheritance and the joint ownership of property between several members of the same family and their dependants, constitutes an obstacle to individual, private or public acquisition which could be aimed at enhancing buildings.*
- *The weak resistance of traditional materials to weather conditions: Run-off and infiltration water have deteriorated the pisé in the Ksar of Ait ben Haddou.*
- *The increased scarcity and rising cost of such materials and competition from new materials (cement breeze blocks, corrugated iron roofing and reinforced concrete floors).*
- *The removal of building materials from ancient buildings and their re-utilization for new constructions.*
- *The loss of traditional know-how among building craftsmen when traditional dwellings are transformed into "modern" houses; competition generated by new building models imported from major conurbations.*

4.2.3.(1) The various forms of impoverishment of the population: a major disparity between the Northern and Southern Sahara

While, according to tradition in desert societies, the decision of exclusion from a social group is equivalent, for an individual dispossessed of the solidarity of others and collective resources, to social if not physical death, modern forms of exclusion, while less formal, nevertheless expose those concerned to extreme poverty which can take the form of illiteracy, sickness, the loss of status and social integration and civic marginalization.

• Illiteracy:

Globally, the ten States which share the Sahara have to deplore a high rate of illiteracy. In Niger, it is one of the highest in the subregion with 84.7% of the population, but differences are significant from one region to another. Furthermore, differences are still very considerable between rural and urban areas: on average, 52% of children living in urban areas attend school as opposed to only 28% in rural areas.

Elsewhere, disparities are also significant from one region to another. In Mauritania, in 1996, the difference in school attendance in rural and urban areas was of the

order of 40 points, with a percentage for the urban area of 97% as opposed to 57% for rural areas. Even in countries where growth seems to be higher (Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya), such growth has generally been of greater benefit to urban rather than rural areas where recorded literacy rates are particularly low by comparison with the national average. In 1994, for example, the latter was estimated to be 75% in Morocco in towns as opposed to 37% in the countryside.

This imbalance is even more dramatic between men and women. In 1999, in Morocco again, 31.1% of women were literate as opposed to 61.1% of men. This illiteracy is all the more alarming insofar as it affects age-groups which are supposed to attend school. Almost 65% of girls aged over 15 are illiterate, a high proportion of them living in rural areas.

• Problems of malnutrition and access to water:

Problems related to malnutrition widened the gaps between the countries of the north and those of the south of the Sahara. The populations of certain Saharo-Sahelian countries are particularly affected.

Similar disparities are to be found in access to drinking water. The rate of connection to public water supplies has experienced a slight development in the Saharo-Sahelian countries. Most of the Malian population has no access to drinking water. Significant progress has admittedly been achieved but remains very limited in regard to the growing demand of the populations. In Mauritania, the provision of public water supplies has gone up from 15.4% of the population in 1990 to 19.1% in 1998, but in eight of its regions, the rate remains below 10%, and in five of them it does not even reach 5%.

• Insalubrious housing:

The ever faster, uncontrolled pace of urbanization has developed forms of growing dire poverty through, inter alia, the development of ill-equipped and insalubrious housing areas. In addition to the question of supplies of drinking water, drainage has become an ever more acute problem. In the absence of adequate facilities, waste water is poured into the streets or sometimes even used for watering local crops consumed by the population.

The most vulnerable populations are enduring the consequences of this situation to the full. The proliferation of detritus, particularly near retail outlets, has worsened problems of hygiene and resultant infection. In many cases, women residing in peri-urban areas use a mixture of waste water and rainwater for their house-

| The figures quoted in this section have been taken from the UNDP Report 2000.

hold chores. Children often play near public refuse dumps where the detritus encroaches on the surrounding area.

In overall terms, poverty would seem to have receded over the past decade. In Mauritania, for example, the proportion of households living below the poverty line decreased from 50.5% in 1990 to 40.7% in 1996. The decrease in poverty is even more noticeable with regard to disparity indicators which show that extreme poverty has been reduced more quickly than poverty, falling from 44.7% of people in 1990 to 32.6% in 1996, that is to say, a drop of almost 12% over that period.

Nevertheless, poverty continues to be a major challenge wherever various conflicts dramatically exacerbate the already difficult life of local populations, more generally in certain Saharo-Saharan countries such as Mali and, to a large extent, Niger, where 63% of the population is poor and 34% extremely poor. There, as elsewhere, poverty essentially affects rural areas where 36% of the Niger population actually lives, namely those who are considered to be extremely poor.

4.3. Social status and vulnerability: towards the feminization of poverty

Whenever the basis of productive activity is subjected to the ups and downs of relative scarcity (fall in resources or overpopulation) or drought, groups of producers are usually the first to be subjected to the consequences such as poverty, exclusion and inevitable economic migration.

In spite of the implementation of structures with an elective basis, members of the dominant groups retain the position of legitimate representative leadership, consulted on all matters of importance. When imbalances grow more serious, it is the social groups within the same community that do not have either ownership of water or of land or the status of belonging to governing groups which end up being most weakened and most exposed to exclusion.

It must nevertheless be emphasized that efforts through school attendance have enabled new elites to emerge among the dominated groups which have come to hold technical positions and administrative posts and now claim real equality within their society.

4.3.1. Young people, school and survival

The path for children belonging to the most impoverished social groups has been clearly traced: quasi-servile labouring for boys, sometimes disguised for girls in the form of early marriage.

In fact, early marriage fulfils a variety of functions: while it releases the father from an extra mouth to feed, while providing him with a few meagre material compensations thanks to the dowry, it also ensures that lineages are prolonged in the context of a high infant mortality rate. It is for that reason that school attendance for girls is not of paramount importance in family strategies, often reduced to pure survival.

But it is in that spirit that modern forms of enslavement have emerged in the form of "entrusting" a young girl to a wealthy family who will bring her up and educate her in compensation for her contribution to household chores. Recent surveys have shown that it amounts to a veritable sale against a semblance of monetary assistance which poor families are quite incapable of refunding.

As for young boys, their school attendance is worthwhile insofar as it enables the family to envisage alternative sources of income against a background of steady deterioration in living conditions. These practices reveal that families are trapped in survival strategies. For them, other forms of more subtle enslavement exist on account of the intensive exploitation to which they are subjected, accompanied by a total denial of freedom.

Furthermore, school produces a gap between the formal equality between individuals, which it advocates on the one hand, and the perpetuation of social inequality that can be observed, on the other. The result is a strong potential for rebellion against the circumstances people have lived through and the causes which they attribute to them, against parents on account of what is thought to be their passive attitude to their fate and sometimes even against the whole of the local and national political system.

4.3.2. Women, the actors who cannot be ignored, are in a weaker position

One of the most serious consequences of the deterioration in the living standards of the populations stems from the upheaval that has affected family and community structures in the broad sense. Until comparatively recently, family relationships in the Sahara were based on codes of behaviour, customs and values, which enabled individuals to construct their identity and to find their rightful place within the group. This allocation of roles and the models that underpinned it have now been brought into question.

In some villages, women account for 70% of the workforce and are in charge of 80% of agricultural production. Nevertheless, it is women who are most badly affected by the incidence of poverty, particularly in cities, where there is violence, disease (particularly STDs) and begging, etc. Many women, either divorced or abandoned, have to look after their children without any alimony or support other than what a few members of their family, if they exist, can provide, and with a number of obligations.

The status of women is in fact directly linked to that of their husbands, according to whether they belong to the ruling families or to the dominated classes. In the latter case, they are expected to take part in production in addition to their own specific economic activities.

This aspect explains why, at a time when the basis of the traditional economy is collapsing, it is women who have often taken up the challenge of ensuring the survival of the family by selling what they produce (which does not circulate within a consumer system) and, quite logically, by undertaking other economic activities (weaving, sewing and cooking, etc.).

Nevertheless, in the predominantly rural Sahara, women perform virtually all the tasks required for maintaining the family, by working the soil, planting, harvesting, handling crops and transforming them into consumable products and looking after storage, transport and even sales. They also ensure that there are adequate supplies of water and wood (for heating, cooking and feeding the livestock, etc.) in addition to keeping and looking after cattle. All these tasks are virtually exclusively and traditionally performed by women. However, not only are these vital duties not recognized as such, but women may appear, through such activities, to be those who are directly responsible for the degradation of their environment.



4.4. Reconversion and participation: to make tourism instrumental in eradicating poverty

As a transversal activity, tourism can provide positive economic spin-offs for the populations. Jobs created either directly or indirectly are numerous and can help to improve local living standards. In the Sahara, the main jobs created directly by tourism are those of camel driver, guide, and all activities directly linked to catering for tourists. However, when it comes to eradicating poverty, it is essentially the jobs created indirectly which need to be increased by enhancing the value of and developing natural and cultural activities which would benefit both the populations and tourists (for example: local produce such as dates and cheeses, and craft goods).

The economic reconversion of men is socially acceptable and possible according to their status within the social group, on account of the profile or the taboos attached to each specific status, or whether a “new” trade represents a path that is reserved for another specific group to which they do not belong. Conversely, when “new” jobs mean a departure from local systems of representation, because they have no equivalent in traditional society, they can then be admitted into the realm of what is acceptable.

This shows how a plan to create new activities and jobs depends on how it will be interpreted by the broad group at which it is aimed (the community) and then by the subgroups which make it up, as much by the new status and roles offered them as by the income it is supposed to provide.

Therefore, and this would seem to be a vital observation, a plan that is viable (or likely to be) is first of all, and in all cases, a plan that has been accepted, if not devised with the agreement and involvement of the local people. That is the price to be paid if contradictions and failures are to be avoided.

During the 1980s, the public authorities in various Saharan countries already contemplated the development of tourism as a potential response to the economic recession and to the degradation of the environment (Tamanrasset or Djanet in Algeria, Tozeur and Douz in Tunisia, Ouarzazate and Zagora in Morocco and Air and Ténéré in Niger, etc.).

To go even further...

With the fight against poverty in mind, it is the populations of the south which have been more seriously affected and are more in need given the precariousness of their living conditions and the increasing degradation of their natural and cultural heritage. It is in the north, however, given the higher degree of tourism development, that conditions are more favourable for implementing a tourism strategy.

In fact, the disparity between tourism development in the north of the Sahara and, respectively, in the south and centre is enormous: Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco attract 96.4% of international tourists, as opposed to 2.4% for Algeria, Libya and the Sudan, and 1.2% for Mali, Chad, Niger and Mauritania.

The assets of Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco in terms of roads, hotels, air links, regulations and policies to attract foreign visitors and to diversify tourism services are infinitely greater than those of the other countries, which accounts to a large extent for this disparity.

In Mali, Mauritania and Chad, however, novel experiments can be launched with the local populations precisely on account of the inadequacy of tourism facilities which opens up opportunities for experimenting with new, more “generous” services in terms of integration, but also more respectful of the cultural and environmental heritage. Therefore, safeguarding and enhancing the intangible heritage in particular will contribute to the recognition of the substantial cultural wealth of the Sahara, which has been rarely acknowledged as such in the face of the material poverty of the Saharan peoples.

5. SAHARAN TOURISM: A COMMON FIELD OF INTEREST

While building a strategy for the sustainable development of tourism depends on the attractiveness of the Sahara, it also raises the question of the viability of the “tourism” option as such. What is the outlook for the development of tourism in the coming years? What is the potential share of Saharan Africa in such activities? Can ecotourism and cultural tourism in the Sahara expect to acquire a share of these new markets?

We shall endeavour to focus on these questions and report on progress achieved in tourism policies pursued by the various countries concerned by making a brief assessment of the state of the institutions and structures set up in order to launch and manage such development.

Convinced as we are of the synergy that could result from bringing the various tourism development policies closer together, we intend also to report on the state of cooperation between the various Saharan countries.

5.1. Policies and tools for tourism development⁽¹⁾

The Sahara is still relatively free from the effects of underdevelopment, the exhaustion of resources, the deterioration of the environment and the collapse of traditional equilibria, which are seen to varying degrees as threats in most of the Saharan countries with their assortment of ill-effects on the life of the populations, the worsening of poverty and the advance of desertification. Faced with this situation and conscious of the Sahara’s extraordinary tourist potential, the States have devised development policies which, to varying degrees, have selected tourism as a response. Attention must now focus on the enhancement of the value of tourism “upstream” in order to anticipate and avoid the dangers which threaten favourable development conditions.

5.1.1. Typology of development policies

A number of criteria can be put forward for attempting to establish a typology for the various tourism development policies. Already, a classification according to the level of development achieved by tourism can help distinguish between:

- *countries where tourism is developed: Tunisia, Egypt (Mediterranean and Red Sea coastlines), Morocco (Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines);*
- *countries where tourism is beginning to develop: Libya and Algeria;*
- *countries where tourism has not yet reached any significant level of development: Sudan, Chad, Mali, Niger and Mauritania.*

In development terms, it would seem more relevant to select a potential product on the basis of which it is possible to distinguish between:

- **Countries where Saharan tourism represents a complement to other forms of tourism.**

In Tunisia, coastal tourism along the beaches (Hammamet, Sousse and Djerba) is the spearhead and basis of Tunisian tourism. The same can be said for the Atlantic (Agadir) and Mediterranean (Tangiers) shores of Morocco, or the Egyptian coastline on the Red Sea (Hurgada and Sharm El Sheikh) and the Mediterranean (Alexandria).

These countries have succeeded in creating enormous hotel capacity which they market through the European network of tour operators and travel agents in the form of package holidays. They have also managed to make their mark on Mediterranean tourism where they have become target destinations.

In Egypt, the development of mass coastal tourism dates back only some 20 years, whereas this country, with its exceptionally rich pharaonic heritage, continues to cultivate the image of an outstanding cultural destination. Morocco, with its circuits of imperial medinas (Rabat, Marrakech, Fez and Meknes) also enjoys this strong cultural image. The same can be said of Mali with tourism in the Dogon country.

Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt felt the need, very early on, to enrich and diversify their services by counting on Saharan tourism which they presented as an additional asset.

¹ Cf. Annex 4: proposed typology.

- **Countries in which the development of tourism is based essentially on the exploitation and the enhancement of the value of the Sahara.**

The Hoggar, the Tassili, the Tibesti, Chinguetti, the Fezzan and Ghadamès are landmark destinations whose fame has nothing in common with the limited number of visitors. These marvels of the Sahara are very frequently equipped with only rudimentary tourism facilities and are therefore marketed by minor tour operators who specialize in exploratory tourism and have devised products based on bivouac accommodation or nomadic camping. Travel is provided by cross-country vehicles, or by camel caravans for longer stays or hikes on foot for shorter trips.

5.1.2. The institutional framework

The Saharan States have wanted to nurture and accompany the development of tourism. They have all promulgated an extensive legislative and regulatory framework and have set about creating relevant public and professional structures.

All the Saharan countries have established a ministerial department for tourism which, in some cases, has been combined with another sector with similar objectives. In instances where tourism has not made a minimal contribution to economic development, it has sometimes been attached to another ministry. The appointment of a minister specifically in charge of tourism reflects the importance which the State attaches to this sector.

Implementation of a tourism development strategy has often been delegated to a National Tourism Bureau (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Mali), enjoying greater flexibility as regards the management of human and financial resources.

Decisions are passed on through regional directorates and regional commissariats or offices. Regional governors and prefects, as well as their delegates, also play a fundamental role in the launching and development of tourism in the Saharan regions.

Municipalities and other local authorities have fully understood what advantage they could draw from tourism, in terms of programmes of development and infrastructure (for which the central government usually assumes responsibility), and taxes such as VAT and tourism taxes.

At the professional level, tourism offices and local committees bringing together representatives of government and the various actors in the sector (hotel managers, transport companies, small businesses and tradesmen) combine to make up this structural framework for the sector.

Lastly, associations and service cooperatives play a part of varying importance according to the countries and regions. In Mali, for example, the National Federation of Small Businesses of Mali provides a remarkable supervisory framework for the sector as it stems from 700 associations bringing together some 30,000 small businesses.

5.1.3. The legislative framework

Elaboration of a legislative and regulatory framework soon proved necessary both to encourage investment and to supervise operations.

As regards investment, the forms of legislation adopted have focused on the definition of development areas, the definition of qualitative and quantitative objectives, the preparation of development plans, the study and implementation of infrastructure, approval procedures, the allocation of land to developers, the supervision of building projects and the establishment of a fiscal regime and the allocation of bonuses and tax exemptions.

This legislative arsenal does not exist in all the Saharan countries. In general, the States have adopted legislation where and when circumstances required it.

For the Saharan regions and given the difficulty of creating tourism projects and their frequently precarious nature during the launching phase, some governments have adopted a more favourable investment regime than that applicable to the tourism sector as a whole. This is the case in Tunisia where the ceiling for authorized bank funding has been raised from 60% to 70% and the term of tax exemption on profits has been extended from five to ten years.

As regards operating procedures, regulations have focused on service standards and conditions governing the supervision and inspection of food, transport and hosting facilities.

5.2. Tourism trends up to 2010

In 2002, tourism was the leading sector of activity worldwide with 714 million tourists in 2001 and an estimated turnover of \$600 billion⁽¹⁾, i.e. 11.6% of world GDP (forecast of \$8,000 billion in 2010, i.e. 12.5% of the world GDP). It accounts for 1.6% of the MSCI world stock exchange index.

With 26 million tourist visits (4% of the world total), a capacity of 850,000 beds and \$10.5 billion (6.3% of world income), the African continent is the poor relation of world tourism, in spite of the wealth of its tourist attractions. Although it recorded the best rate of growth (11% between 1985 and 1998), Africa cannot expect to rank top on the world tourism scene.

With more than 15.6 million tourist arrivals, a capacity of accommodation of 583,354 beds and income of \$7.5 million, the countries which share the Sahara constitute the leading tourism area in Africa.

Even if Saharan tourism accounts for only a limited share of such tourism and remains a dearer commodity than coastline tourism, for want of accurate statistics regarding regionalization of income in foreign currency, we have estimated, on the basis of global tourism income, that the income from Saharan tourism probably amounted to \$600 million in 2001.

The same can be said for employment where for want of regional statistics we have estimated on the basis of ratios put forward by World Tourism Organization and ILO surveys that the number of jobs directly related to Saharan tourism could amount to 20,000 and that the number of indirectly related jobs could reach 100,000, particularly in such sectors as transport, the craft industries, agriculture and services.

New customers, new markets and services, new destinations, new methods of information and distribution affect all tourism operators whether they be major operators or small or medium enterprises, or even very small enterprises, provided they know how to take advantage of certain opportunities.

In fact:

- *The tourism sector will grow considerably in the next 10 years;*
- *New customers will require new products based on particular consideration for ethics and the environment, quality and authenticity, meeting others and sharing with them, and the desire to preserve the environment for future generations;*
- *The environment and natural resources perpetuate*

tourism activity and, conversely, carefully devised tourism, well integrated into its environment, can perpetuate resources on which its activity is based;

- *In an increasingly urbanized world where progress is synonymous with rapidity and speed, where lifestyles tend to resemble each other and cultures to become homogenized, visitors, when choosing their holidays, seek authenticity, a change of scenery, intercultural exchange and local products.*

Estimate of jobs created for an eight-day camel hike to Djanet (Essendilène) for a group of eight tourists⁽²⁾

Directly created jobs include:

- One French guide for eight days
- One local guide for eight days
- One cook for eight days
- One head camel-driver for eight days
- Two camel-drivers (12 camels)
- Two guide/drivers and their vehicle for two days (transfer from airport to point of departure, outward and return).

N.B.: The camels are usually hired from the same family group, which also provides the camel-drivers. In fact, they are not necessarily the owners of the animals but this ensures a wider distribution of the money generated by tourism.

Indirectly related jobs include:

- Permanent or seasonal staff at the reception facility: agency chief, secretary, logistics man, mechanic, caretaker, etc.
- Staff at the accommodation facility: cooks, maintenance personnel, waiters, caretakers, receptionist, etc.
- Local craftsmen and souvenir tradesmen
- Staff belonging to the following trades: butchers, grocers, garage managers and mechanics, etc.

It is very difficult to quantify what tourism generates for all these trades. It is easy to imagine the positive effects of consumption generated by tourism. Nevertheless, when supplies are difficult to obtain, the negative consequences of tourism should not be underestimated as, for example, in the case of a rise in the cost of living for the local populations and a shortage of basic goods.

(1) WTO figures.

(2) M. C. Leservoiser, UNESCO Consultant, Cf. Annex 6 for a detailed presentation of the budget.

Tourism, a sector which bridges all other activities, whether economic, ecological, agricultural, cultural or social, must in the coming years display innovation and imagination in order to meet this growing demand.

For Africa in general and the Sahara in particular, it can also provide a lever which could drive development and the fight against poverty for the benefit of those populations that are victims of various forms of exclusion and marginalization.

What matters then is to identify and assess those factors which can influence the tourism market, new products, new segments of customers, their environment and new means of funding, and to outline the major potential developments of the principal sectors of Saharan tourism and new market outlets for 2010-2020.

What will the types of employment and investment be in the decade 2010-2020? What will be the most attractive areas? What will the impact be of new information and communication technologies on the future potential of the Sahara and what it has to offer? How can the most underprivileged populations be accompanied in this process? What promising initiatives and strategies should be implemented?

The fact must not be overlooked that tourism in the Sahara may intervene positively in circumstances where situations have been worsened by malnutrition and disease. If seen as a contribution to eradicating poverty, extreme poverty and exclusion, tourism should not lead to re-establishing former circumstances – particularly those governed by servile relationships within communities – but should help to re-establish human dignity and to consolidate the potential of sustainable development. That being so, it will have to face local contradictions stemming from the dual necessity of preserving cultures and specificities while responding to aspirations to democracy and equality.

Tourism, as a factor for discovering the cultures and landscapes of the Sahara, has this twofold mission of contributing to fighting against material precariousness and to enhancing the value – without overlooking the actors' point of view – of the cultural, tangible and intangible products which it has bequeathed to humanity as a heritage.

5.3. Organizing visits: for whom, by whom and how?

5.3.1. Who are the tourists who go to the Sahara, and for what type of tourism?

While tourists visiting the Sahara are more varied in origin, they tend to comprise middle and senior management executives, teachers, members of the professions, medical circles, and industrialists. They usually enjoy a comfortable income. Travelling to the Sahara generally reflects an intellectual and spiritual initiative. Sensitive as they are to respect for human beings and their environment, these tourists are fascinated by the pristine nature of the Saharan environment, attracted by nomadic life and ready to follow advice on behaviour.

Nevertheless, with charter flights and evidence of “massification” of Saharan tourism, the clientele as such has changed. Tourists have become more interested in new experiences and less respectful of the environment. A classification of tourists would seem worthwhile as they are the people who respond to the demand and it is their expectations which guide tour operators.

The fact should not be overlooked, however, that a tourist is first and foremost a human being, who arrives in the Sahara full of his own dreams and images, for whom travel is a means of discovering the world. He should be considered as a “pupil” and the host populations should be seen as “masters” when accompanying the tourist in his cultural discovery.

• “Day excursionists”:

These are travellers who, on the occasion of a traditional and/or seaside stay, purchase, either in advance or on the spot, one or two days of experience of the Sahara. The experience as such amounts, as can be seen at Douz (Tunisia), to leaving their hotel around 2 or 4 p.m., according to the time of year, to go on a camel ride. This type of excursion usually provides a limited view of the desert on account of the speed at which events occur but can tempt the tourist involved to come back in order to extend the experience.

This type of tourist is to be found in Tunisia and, to a lesser extent, in Morocco (desert sites are farther afield). The only expenses incurred are the price of hiring the camel, the purchase of a souvenir photograph and various craft products (not necessarily produced locally). At best, these short-term visits provide the experience of one night in the desert in hotel-style comfort, although in a tent.

• **Discoverers:**

They are often travellers who are undertaking their first voyage of discovery. The desire for escape, a certain fascination for the desert and comfortable travelling conditions lead them to the safest of Saharan destinations. They are usually excellent consumers of local craft products. They are very sensitive to political instability or lack of security, whether real or merely suggested by media.

• **The initiated:**

They are usually accustomed to adventurous holidays on foot and accept rudimentary living conditions (sleeping in a tent or out in the open, no showers). They are eager to meet people and to understand what they discover. They normally travel with specialized tour operators who are able to offer them travel that is off the beaten track. They want to go where nobody else goes, and often have a militant approach with regard to respect for people and their environment. They are ready to sleep in the homes of local people and travel throughout the Sahara.

• **The independent:**

These are essentially travellers who move around in complete autonomy, with their own “super-equipped” vehicles, and make very little use of local personnel (sometimes a guide, on the understanding that the use of GPS provides access to all places, particular neolithic sites). They consume lots of water and wood without necessarily realizing what the consequences could be and make only minimal purchases in the countries they visit (food, fuel and craft products).

As they are unsupervised, they often cause, through ignorance, irreparable damage to the environment and to neolithic sites. It would seem that their presence causes more damage than it might bring additional resources to those regions and their population. They are to be found in Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Niger, and less so in the Libya and Mauritania.

5.3.2. Travel designers and organizers

Organizing a trip into the desert cannot be improvised for obvious safety reasons and out of respect for human beings, their environment and the services provided. The Sahara needs quality tourism which meets these various criteria.

As all professionals know, it is easy, when devising a particular trip, to invite local service suppliers to compete and then to choose the cheapest. There will always be

someone cheaper who is ready to work for virtually nothing. The tour operator may claim ignorance as an excuse and purchase a service without really thinking of the consequences, in complete contradiction with the notion of fair trading.

• **Tour operators**

The tour operator concocts various services. He normally sells his package holidays without any middleman. He publishes a brochure at least once a year which is sent to all those who are on his mailing list.

He coordinates:

- *the preparation and creation of circuits, price evaluations, flight bookings, itineraries, drafting of technical documents;*
- *their marketing: publishing brochures, advertising, promotion, information and sales;*
- *organization of the trips: booking of various services such as the flight, land transport, guides, pharmacy, food supplies and tents, etc.;*
- *conduct of the journey: accompaniment, management of part of the logistics. Reliance is usually on a local team such as the host agency in the country, an independent guide and a hotelkeeper;*
- *the accounting aspects of the trip: production cost, invoicing, accounts and payment of service suppliers;*
- *after-sales service: answering clients' comments and handling any disputes.*

Many specialized tour operators offer trips to most of the countries in the Saharan region (Chad, Sudan and northern Mali – except Timbuktu – not necessarily listed in the brochures). They often provide direct marketing to their customers which ensures better preparation of the trips.

• **Recipient agencies and local guides**

In all the Saharan countries, it is possible to find local partners such as guides and hosts, but the local host capacity will depend on how much tourism has been developed. Implementing travel of this kind requires specialized logistics. There is evidence of a substantial effort on the part of tour operators with regard to the transfer of skills and the provision of training for accompanying guides, cooks and logisticians.

5.4. From accessibility to the dangers of massification

It is difficult, virtually impossible, at one and the same time, to prepare a population to host and guide foreigners and to seek to develop tourism in an area which suddenly becomes easily accessible at a cheap price. Tourism professionals and tourists themselves bear responsibility in such circumstances.

Adventure tourism, which is essentially itinerant, is different from traditional tourism which concentrates tourists in specific accommodation with previously trained personnel. It is difficult to guide and “concentrate” “adventurers” in any given place.

5.4.1. Typology of area accessibility

Accessibility to attractive areas, quite remote from capitals, is tending to improve:

the Sahara for developed tourism:

- Morocco: access to the Saharan area via Marrakech or Ouarzazate
- Tunisia: access to the Saharan area via Tozeur or Djerba by scheduled and charter flights.
- Egypt: access by scheduled or charter flights via Luxor.

the Sahara for developing tourism:

- Mauritania: originally, air access was expensive and exclusively via Nouakshott. At present, four to five flights per weekend land at Atar, near Chinguetti and the Ouadane erg.
- Algeria: originally, air access was exclusively via Algiers, but internal flights were established with Air Algérie for Tamanrasset, Ghardhaïa, Timimoun and Djanet. Since then, four to five direct charter flights per weekend to Djanet and Tamanrasset have ensured a spectacular development of Saharan tourism in Algeria. Direct flights have reassured tourists.
- Libya: air access is essentially through Tripoli via scheduled flights, followed by domestic flights, particularly since the end of the embargo. Various trial charter flights to Sebha have encouraged the development of tourism.
- Egypt: access by scheduled or charter flights via Luxor, which makes access lengthy but an integral part of the journey.

landlocked tourism in the Sahara:

- Sudan: access through a scheduled airline to Khartoum.
- Chad: access through a scheduled airline via N-Djamena. Planned charter flights to Faya Largeau have

not yet come into operation on account of the present circumstances except to Tibesti, making such flights unprofitable.

- Niger: access via Niamey on scheduled and charter flights or via Tamanrasset (Algeria) and a desert road to reach Agadez. Charter flights landed there during the winter of 2000-2001, but as the runway does not comply with international airport standards, it is currently under repair.
- Mali: access via charter flights to Gao or scheduled flights to Niamey (Niger), enabling relatively easy access to the Adrar des Iforas.

5.4.2. The advantages of charter flights

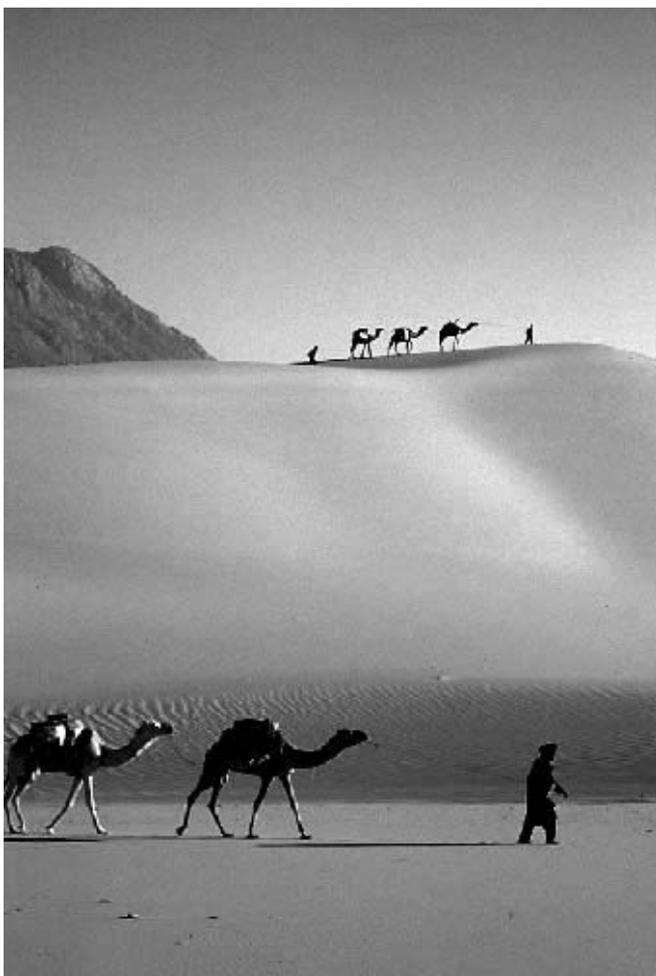
Accessibility to tourist areas by air is an indispensable condition for the development of tourism. Nevertheless, the way charter flights operate should be fully understood. Tour operators make a financial commitment by chartering planes each week on a particular route. For relatively modest operators such as adventure tour operators, the risks involved are substantial as unsold seats must be paid for, regardless. In order to meet their commitments, some such operators choose a very low price policy, leading the public to believe that large passenger numbers and smart prices are development factors. In their case, it would seem reasonable to ask whether the sale of plane seats is not the dominant factor in travel organization. This consideration would justify a debate on the true impact of this type of tourism on the destinations that it concerns.

The positive aspects of charter flights are as follows:

- *Facilitated access to and opening up of certain areas. Whether it be Atar in Mauritania, Sebha in Libya or Agadez in Niger, the arrival of charter flights has made it possible to open up these destinations to a larger number of travellers.*
- *Lower airfares and therefore lower travel costs have also enabled a larger number of travellers to treat themselves to a visit to the Sahara.*
- *Reduction in travel times (as the airports used lie at the heart of the areas visited), therefore an increase in the frequency of flights (the trend being towards more travel, for shorter periods, particularly during the winter).*
- *An increase in the number of jobs related to tourism.*
- *An increase in the direct or indirect economic spin-offs which does not mean development.*
- *An increase in development and intercultural exchange projects.*

5.4.3. The danger of massification

- The negative impact on populations which are not prepared within so short a time to witness the arrival of so many foreigners with unpredictable behaviour and to welcome and accompany them. The shock can be a brutal one.
- Degradation of the environment (woods, waste and water) and the historical heritage (plundering of neolithic sites, deterioration of murals and carvings, etc.).
- Lower prices encouraging a larger number of tourists who are not necessarily prepared for this type of tourism.
- Heavy concentration of tourists in the same area, at the same time and for periods of eight days (which hardly leave time to go farther afield).
- Poor quality of services: absence of training, rapid increase in the number of travellers, inability to invest (in equipment, vehicles, etc.).



5.5. The quality of tourist destinations: a condition for long-term development

The impact of tourism on the environment and the impact of the environment on tourism are interconnected and related in a variety of ways. The long-term development of tourism cannot be envisaged without a quality environment. Similarly, it would be inconceivable that tourism should destroy the environment and resources which nurture it. Deterioration of the environment has become one of the main factors for rejecting destinations.

New forms of tourist behaviour have developed over the last 10 years bringing into play new tourism practices. Gone are the times when mass tourism involved “sea, sand and sun”, amounting to holidays spent on one square metre of fine sand.

The quest for authentic, green destinations and holidays spent in protected areas and sites of ecological value have opened up new markets. Travelling differently, respecting the environment, feeling closer to nature and discovering unfamiliar cultural, food and clothing customs feature as criteria in the choice of new types of holidays.

Awareness of the fact that holidays are not solely an opportunity to enjoy leisure but a privileged moment for discovering, learning and sharing new experiences, has made substantial progress since the Rio Summit in 1992 when sustainable development became the choice of lifestyle for human beings in the twenty-first century.

Tourism in protected areas (national parks and nature reserves) has developed considerably in response to a lifestyle in which human beings today are seeking their rightful place in the ecosystem. The trend in northern Europe is increasingly towards nature tourism and, more particularly, ecotourism. This is consequently the type of tourism to offer, especially when 57% of the clientele for North Africa is European.

New travel models have enabled the development of a more respectful approach to the environment and have come to be seen as specifications for quality and ethics in tourism.

The notion of integrated management of destinations is seen from a global standpoint and relies on the integration of quality at every stage of management. All Saharan tourism operators and actors view this approach in terms of the respective territories, companies and travel packages.

Recent years have been marked by the development of many brands, certifications, Agenda 21, good practice guides, charters and codes of ethics for travel operators and travellers alike. These criteria have become decisive in determining the choice of destination or product.

Evidently, new professions will emerge through the specialization of markets, products and offers. This will be particularly the case in the fields of training, project accompaniment, and visitor reception and guidance where there is a high demand for men and women capable of hosting visitors in the specific context of each territory and its way of life.

This is all the more important as tourism can, paradoxically, become the mirror of poverty as it highlights in stark terms the disparity that exists between the living standards of the host populations and that of visitors who display other social and cultural identities.

5.6. Tourism cooperation among the Saharan countries: transfrontier solidarity

If cooperating means working together towards a common objective, the 10 Saharan States have more than one thing in common. The singular relationship between the geological and climatic history of the continent, the history of its populations' adaptation to the slow process of desertification, its tangible and intangible achievements and the exchanges which have marked the Sahara in all directions over the centuries are all factors which explain why the Sahara is both a shared possession and a diverse one.

The multiplicity of its languages and the variety of its local traditions conceal a unity that is always ready to reappear, such as the joint sharing of a particular resource, vital solidarity for enhancing a particular territory and patterns of exchange which for centuries have extended beyond mere commerce to encompass family ties.

5.6.1. The framework

Convinced as they are of the part that tourism can play and its important contribution to economic and social development, most of the Saharan countries have signed cooperation agreements in the field of tourism.

The framework of such agreements depends on the level of development achieved in that sector and the state of diplomatic relations between the countries concerned. For countries which have significant inter-related interests, the framework for cooperation is often a mixed commission, that is to say, a high-level commission usually chaired by the Prime Ministers and composed of many ministers. The commission meets once a year to set out the broad outline of cooperation between the two States and delegates to ministerial departments the task of implementing the agreements.

The cooperation commissions in the field of tourism constitute another type of framework. They meet at the initiative of the ministers concerned and often lead to the signing of five-year agreements. This is the case of those signed by Tunisia with Mali in 1994, Niger in 1982 and Algeria in 1997. These conventions are usually followed by the signing of operational programmes lasting between one and three years (e.g. plans for tourism cooperation drawn up by Tunisia with Egypt and with Algeria).

5.6.2. The content

These agreements usually aim to:

- encourage movement between the countries and strengthen tourist flows;
- promote the exchange of information on the legislative framework, and systems to encourage the private sector to create joint projects (e.g. the agreement between Tunisia and Algeria);
- give support to exchanges of experts and experience in all fields including development, promotion, marketing, statistics and vocational training (exchanges for students and trainees, the organization of traineeships and the twinning of training facilities);
- take part in fairs, exhibitions and seminars organized by each of the countries;
- organize tourism and cultural weeks, visits by hotel managers, travel agents and journalists to facilitate marketing procedures;
- exchange strategies, documents and visual material on the marketing of tourism;
- conduct close cooperation in preparation for major international conferences.

To go even further...

Tourism in the Sahara is a recent activity which has not yet really taken off. In spite of the richness and diversity of the Sahara, the development of tourism there is due less to inadequate international demand than to restrictions which hamper the development of that sector on account of the relatively low priority given to tourism in each country.

Up to now, tourism has enjoyed greater growth in the countries of Northern Sahara which have a more diversified economy, whereas in the countries of the South, where the eradication of poverty is more urgent, its development has remained very limited. It is true, however, that resources allocated to tourism in those countries are often in competition with those earmarked for other sectors that feature as a higher priority in government action (e.g. health, education, infrastructure and agriculture).

Furthermore, administrative cohesion between the ministries of tourism and other ministries is not always adequate, nor is it so between central government and regional and local authorities. The inadequacy of investment and the scarcity of initiatives severely hamper the development of tourism in the States of the South, whereas in the countries of the North, particularly Morocco and Tunisia, the high density of tourism and the multiplication of travel circuits have often led to a somewhat "mercantile" approach to Saharan tourism and to the deterioration of some sites, thereby threatening the quality of the product.

Although originally devised as a specific product, Saharan tourism, in spite of the number of tourists involved, remains closely linked to coastal tourism in Tunisia and cultural tourism in Morocco. This has resulted in the persistence of seasonal and geographical concentration, limits the length of tourist visits and, consequently, the use of accommodation facilities in the Sahara which suffer from a very low rate of occupancy (30% to 40%), thereby severely reducing the profitability of companies in that sector.

Lastly, the compartmentalization of what is offered generates a weakening of the overall image, and even of competition, whereas the cooperation programmes undertaken by all the Saharan States are supposed to create synergy. The fact remains that such cooperation, limited essentially to government structures, has had some positive results which, nonetheless, remain inadequate in regard to what is at stake and particularly the notion of a "single Saharan product" which can be marketed as such on a subregional and international scale.

FROM THE CURRENT STATUS TO PROPOSALS FOR ACTION...

Assessment of the current situation has highlighted both the extreme richness and precariousness of the Sahara's assets with regard to the natural heritage with its extraordinary landscapes and to the innumerable facets of its undying cultural heritage. This immense but delicately balanced potential displays a degree of vulnerability and fragility which must be taken into account if it is to be protected and safeguarded and also judiciously rehabilitated and enhanced.

Major objectives in the fight against poverty include reversing the process of deterioration of resources, and adopting development procedures with the populations concerned through implementation of plans to which tourism can make a sizeable contribution.

Defining the founding principles for action and the doctrines to be applied as well as describing avenues of intervention, field by field, are therefore indispensable to give substance to the proposals for cooperation between the ten Member States.

What can be suggested to the Member States in this field? How can the practicability, feasibility and efficiency required for achieving such cooperation be adequately illustrated? These factors will be the subject of the second part of this document. The action described therein corresponds to this frame of mind. It will be all the more effective if its beneficiaries have made such action their own or if it emanates from their own populations. This quite simply means that if a project is to be viable, it must be seen to be appropriate from the outset – i.e. devised with and by the populations which are supposed to benefit from it. It must provide the possibility of extending the potential of resources, locally, without altering the fine balance of the environment.

PART TWO

TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE SAHARA: Recommendations

1. COOPERATION: A REQUIREMENT MORE THAN A NECESSITY

1.1. A matter of effectiveness

Giving a cooperation framework to States through this current project constitutes an adjustment to reality; a consolidation of interstate cooperation, both longstanding and varied, with a view to invigorating and mastering development (following the example of cooperation developed between States sharing the Alps and the Mekong).

The complexity of relationships between human beings and their territories in due respect for ecological equilibria raise significant challenges for each Saharan State. Consequently, transferring successful experience, exchanging information on operating procedures and comparing different standpoints on problems are means which can already facilitate the endeavours of the various parties concerned.

Some of these fields of exchange are already marked out. How can fragile or scarce natural resources be protected or even developed? How can tourism be ensured to contribute to the eradication of poverty? How can local populations be involved in defining and participating in projects?

States are all the more justified in cooperating when they share, on either side of their borders, similar physical areas (for example, the physical similarity between the Tassili n'Ajjer (Algeria and Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Tamesna and the Air (Algeria and Niger), Tibesti and Borku (Chad and Libya), etc.) and populations which have settled there. Transfrontier tourist circuits can then be developed on the basis of shared natural and/or cultural heritage (the mountain oases – Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco; fogarra oases – Algeria, Mauritania, Mali and Niger; trading routes and the routes of Islam, etc.).

There has been a continuous increase in the number of institutions, conventions and protocols over the last decade, adding, new actors and new approaches to the complexity of existing action and funding procedures. Member States have been asked to take part in numerous international meetings and to commit substantial expenditure merely to keep abreast of trends and decisions without necessarily being able to take advantage of the benefits involved. Furthermore, the allocation of follow-up assignments to such and such a decentralized national structure has dispersed endeavours, weakened coordination and increased demand for funding.

International legal instruments concerning the Sahara and relative to sustainable development

- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (adopted at Paris, 17 June 1994)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC - (adopted at New York, 9 May 1992) and the Kyoto Protocol (adopted on 11 December 1997);
- Convention on Biological Diversity (adopted at Rio de Janeiro, 5 June 1992)
- Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (adopted at Basel, 22 March 1989)
- Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (adopted at Vienna, 22 March 1985);
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (adopted at Bonn, 23 June 1979)
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora - CITES - (adopted at Washington in 1973)

This project seeks therefore to bring together otherwise diverse preoccupations in a single approach to separate themes (preservation of the natural heritage, sustainable development through ecotourism and eradication of the multidimensional forms of poverty). Accordingly, it is a factor of synergy between the States through a common approach to issues related to international government, as well as through collaboration, aid and mutual assistance to improve national and local governments.

Bearing this in mind, the ten States have been invited to strengthen their cooperation even more and to adopt what they believe to be the most realistic and effective approach, either by giving it an indicative nature or, conversely, by making of it a more binding commitment. It is up to them, naturally, to decide.

- Meeting the challenge of the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara will require strengthened cooperation between States in order to harmonize their policies in the fields of tourism as well as in the identification, preservation and management of the heritage, for which experience acquired through the sites inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List and the reserves of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme will be useful.

- In addition to the States, the partners in this cooperation will be the intergovernmental organizations, particularly regional ones, tourism enterprises and local populations represented by their local authorities and associations. Such cooperation will be aimed at facilitating the movement of tourists within the Saharan area, encouraging ethical tourism that is respectful of the populations and environmentally friendly, through implementing a code of conduct for tour operators and a charter of ethics for the traveller in the Sahara.

- Coordination of policies in the fields which concern the project could be conducted on the basis of the implementation of better measures and practices identified in the various countries. An exchange of experience and know-how could be conducted in the context of thematic cooperation between the Saharan States.

1.2. Guiding principles for cooperation

• Principle 1

Preserve the Sahara's cultural and natural heritage for future generations:

1.1 The cultural and natural heritage is a resource that is both tangible and spiritual. Cultural diversity and biodiversity are necessary for the development of humankind and make up the common heritage of humanity. Their importance should be asserted for the benefit of present and future generations.

1.2 Programmes for the protection and enhancement of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as the natural heritage, should foster a better understanding and greater awareness of the significance of the heritage among the Saharan populations and visitors alike.

1.3 Tourism is one of the main vehicles for cultural exchanges and generates economic and social development which makes of it an instrument for eradicating poverty. On these two accounts, it is a factor for prosperity and peace. Its dynamic relationship with culture and the environment must be managed in a sustainable fashion for the benefit of present and future generations.

• Principle 2

Devise tourism as an instrument in the service of the eradication of poverty:

2.1 Eco-cultural tourism must play its part in the context of UNESCO's contribution to implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration and, more particularly, to achieving the objective of halving poverty by 2015, as well as in the context of the follow-up to the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development (25 August-2 September 2002).

2.2. Poverty, viewed as a denial of human rights and which involves economic, social, educational, cultural and ethical dimensions, can be combated through quality tourism based on a strategy that integrates due consideration for the populations in circumstances of poverty as a dynamic factor in its development.

2.3 The direct involvement of the populations concerned in breaking out of the poverty trap is a determining factor. With that aim in mind, the effective participation of the populations and, more particularly, populations in dire poverty, will be encouraged in the design, implementation and evaluation of tourism programmes and policies. Such action will be supported by appropriate training programmes.

• Principle 3

Promote tourism policy that is respectful of the heritage and economically effective:

3.1 Projects for the development of tourism and infrastructure must take due account of aesthetic, social and cultural factors, natural and cultural landscapes and the significance of sites. Decisions must be taken after due consultation of local populations adequately informed of the consequences of implementation of the projects through impact studies, particularly on scarce and fragile resources. As regards infrastructure, preference will be given to local materials and to consideration of the specific features of local architecture.

3.2 Programmes to raise awareness of the cultural, environmental and social aspects of tourism will be organized for public and private tourism actors, as well as for the local populations and tourists. The training of local actors and professionals and the creation of brands and standards for tourism products will be determining factors for the quality of tourism and the success of visitors' experience of tourism.

3.3. The active cooperation of Saharan tourism partners in the design and implementation of tourism policies and programmes is essential in the quest for innovative and sustainable solutions to the challenges of Saharan tourism. The mobilization of capacities at the local level and the part played by local authorities in seeking to establish an appropriate balance to ensure the sustainability of tourism are essential.

• Principle 4

Encourage the participation of Saharan populations in tourism development:

4.1 Programmes to educate and raise awareness of the values of the heritage among Saharan populations must encourage the development of qualifications for heritage interpreters and guides. Such programmes should promote knowledge and respect among local people for their heritage and encourage them to take charge of its protection.

4.2 Programmes for tourism development should include measures to ensure training in culture and environmental tourism trades aimed at young Saharans in particular. The promotion of the intangible heritage will include measures to support creativity in the fields of craft industries and artistic expression.

4.3 The Saharan populations will command conditions of access for tourists to the sites near to where they live and even refuse access for reasons of fragility or spiritual identity if the presence of tourists is considered to be incompatible. Financial spin-offs from tourism should be shared fairly to cover the costs of protecting and managing the heritage, as well as to improve local living conditions, particularly as regards access to essential facilities such as water, food, housing and education.

The principal focus of this cooperation is described below according to the various fields concerned: tourism, the natural and cultural heritage and the eradication of poverty.

The measures planned will involve the harmonization of laws and regulations and arbitration with regard to the sharing of competence between local authorities and the decentralized echelons of government, the central government and its subdivisions, and tourism bureaux and institutions. Priority ought to be given to international governance and the adaptation of international provisions for development aid to the Saharan context.

2. FOR SUSTAINABLE SAHARAN TOURISM: WHAT ACTION, ACCORDING TO WHAT ETHICS?

The WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism underlines the importance of promoting “an equitable, responsible and sustainable world tourism order, whose benefits will be shared by all sectors of society”. Given the fragility of the various environments in the Sahara, the promotion of sustainable, shared tourism requires not only to fix a limit on the number of tourists, well below the capacity of each particular site, but also to establish rules of conduct to be adhered to by every visitor and, ipso facto, every organiser.

Generally speaking, the idea of concentrated, mass tourism must be excluded on account of its destructive effects but also because it is inconceivable to imagine such a situation in the Sahara. It is vital to understand and to ensure that it is understood that the very spirit of a trip to the Sahara will disappear with mass, low-priced tourism which penalizes the visitor, the host and the natural and cultural resources on which it is based. A large number of visitors is not compatible with this extremely sensitive human and natural environment. Travel of that kind would lose its very purpose and therefore sustainability would be out of the question.

In response to the objection that this point of view is “elitist” and would deprive a clientele of modest means of discovering the Sahara, we would point out that some States to the North of the Mediterranean have devised methods of helping people on low incomes to go on holiday, such as “holiday vouchers”. Let it be said again that the price of a tour which does not include the costs of training and paying staff, and maintaining the heritage cannot help to achieve the objective of developing sustainable tourism. Furthermore, once the social, cultural and environmental costs have been appropriately included, social and community-inspired tourism can make up a promising line of development for Saharan tourism.

Action to be undertaken by tourism professionals is closely linked to variations in tourism demand. The institutions must launch and support initiatives which tend to foster greater respect for the future of the Sahara and the peoples that live there.

Cooperation can be based on the fact that some countries have substantial experience in tourism organization and a sound knowledge of the countries where tourists come from. Furthermore, figures show that the countries in the northern arc of the Sahara – either individually or simultaneously – already possess the material and financial means and the infrastructure (roads, airports and public amenities) which would be extremely useful in regional cooperation.

The contribution that Saharan tourism could make to the eradication of poverty and extreme poverty will be all the more effective if three conditions are fulfilled: (1) generating income, (2) generating sustainable development, and (3) ensuring that these resources reach the destitute. As tourism is seasonal, it should firstly generate income in the form of directly or indirectly related jobs (accommodation, tourism services, guides, etc.) and, secondly, have a leverage effect on other sectors of activity by increasing demand for products that are produced throughout the year (craft industry, livestock-breeding and agriculture, etc.).

What actually nurtures this form of tourism is a complex combination of natural landscapes of the tangible heritage (architecture, town planning, artefacts, etc.) and intangible heritage (folk music, dance, recitations, etc.) which are currently under threat. From that point of view, the desire on the part of the ten States to develop environmentally friendly tourism means reversing the process that generates poverty, protecting the most vulnerable populations and increasing available resources for their benefit.

Consequently, action aimed at developing tourism is inextricably linked with that aimed at enhancing biodiversity, protecting scarce resources and rehabilitating those assets of fragile heritage which are in the process of disappearing.

2.1. States and institutions : raising awareness among and providing support for tourism actors

Development of a sustainable partnership strategy at national and subregional levels between all the players concerned in the tourism and para-tourism sector.

- *Create regular consultation frameworks involving local tourism actors (States, tour operators, promoters, elected representatives, local authorities, NGOs and institutions, etc.), and women and young people in particular, in order to define national and local strategies and coordinate them at regional level.*
- *Develop awareness initiatives (modification of behaviour patterns for the benefit of sustainable tourism) among both tourists and host populations.*
- *Provide tourism actors with joint tools for helping in decision-making and in evaluating tourism projects.*
- *Adapt strategic principles and recommendations to local and national specificities.*

Market surveys: There is little information available today in terms of statistical data on measuring tourist flows, and the economic spin-offs and impacts of tourism in the Sahara. A preliminary conclusion would therefore be that of the need to conduct a precise assessment throughout the subregion and the countries by analysing the potential of the Sahara and the features of the type of tourism to be developed (a study on the various types of clientele, their behaviour, current and future impacts of tourism on the environment, the economy, local community life and the link with national and regional policies, cost-benefit analyses of sites, the ideal size of groups according to the hosting capacity of sites).

Strengthening of airline services: As tourism and air transport are interdependent, neither can succeed without the other, which means that policies have to be devised to make fares more attractive. The idea of a "Saharan ticket" which would make the main airports in the Sahara accessible for a reasonable fare is by no means unrealistic as the Middle East and Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association has contemplated devising a round-trip ticket which would enable tourists to visit as many countries in the region as they like.

Facilitating transit between adjacent States by increasing the number of border transit points and simplifying procedures relating to border police, customs and health authorities. The idea of instituting a "Sahara" visa similar to the "Shengen" one could be an appreciable step forward. A similar initiative has been taken in the context of the Inter-State Technical Committee for Tourism (CTIT) bringing together Niger, Burkina Faso, Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire.

Organization of transfrontier trade whether commercial (either terminating or slowing down smuggling) or services; creation of off-shore zones for the benefit of both sides; facilitating movement (of border populations and tourists on excursions).

Extending tourism cooperation to the countries of origin of the tourists who could assist the authorities of the Saharan countries in their efforts to plan and manage tourism (legal framework, development of human resources, training of guides, protection of the heritage, implementation of infrastructure and information and commercial organization).

Promotion of national and subregional tourism, an indispensable complement to international tourism, subject to sharp variations in response to the media coverage of political events and currency fluctuations.

Regulations:

- *Harmonize the prices of services: increase concertation between host agencies, foreign tour operators and professional unions (local guides, camel drivers, cooks, etc.) in order to encourage the establishment of fairer "official" rates which would take better account of the services rendered by those who are at the end of the line, namely local workers. Problems related to dumping would have to be avoided as this process drags prices down, as well as the quality and the transfer of income.*
- *Simplify procedures governing the investment and re-investment of profits; updating the tax collection code.*
- *Regulate all tourist and para-tourist activities: hunting, rallies, mechanized sports and camping, and monitor the creation of circuits.*
- *Implement systems for checking entry to and exit from the Sahara.*
- *Set up procedures for the equitable distribution of the financial spin-offs of tourism (involvement of the local population in tourism management, revision of conditions of access to credit facilities and creation of a solidarity fund).*
- *In the event of conflicts, have recourse to mediation (and in general terms, include this dimension in training programmes).*

Surveillance of tourism sites in order to safeguard the tangible and intangible heritage and to ensure maximum safety for tourists. Mine-clearing operations must be undertaken as a priority, particularly in those countries where tourism is developing with difficulty on account of an image of insecurity.

Strengthening of the capacities of strategic tourism actors: strengthening the tourism administration in order to compensate for the disorganized status of many tourism sites for want of qualified staff and suitable facilities; provide for training courses and support the organization of tourism actors into groups, tourism syndicates or associations; delegate more responsibility to the local authorities and associations.

Joint implementation of circuits for marketing tourism products according to fair trading rules and for the benefit of the most vulnerable populations. This would involve facilitating the creation of host micro-enterprises (short-term rentals and bed-and-breakfast accommodation) and reception structures (family associations and travel agencies).

Promotion of the preservation of the cultural and natural heritage, notably by support for the training of specialized guides (guide-interpreters), who, while continuing to be the people who welcome visitors and help them discover the attractions of the Sahara, will have to develop towards the status of guide to culture, nature and society in the Sahara. The task of such guides will be to explain how fragile and yet rigorous the natural environment is and how human beings can adapt to it while raising awareness among tourists of the need not to alter it.

Creation of an international Saharan tourism centre: Training is a fundamental axis of these recommendations; professional competence enables people to practise a real trade and to be paid accordingly. Training programmes will be adapted to the various tourism trades and should encourage professionalism thanks to transversal programmes (history and geography, travel organization and management techniques, understanding of the expectations of foreign tourists, respect for the heritage and language learning, etc.). This centre would provide support for a core of Saharan expertise in regard to sustainable development.

Encouragement for the diversification of products and the creation of new and sustainable products in the wake of socio-economic impact studies, thanks to planning and concertation bringing together, on a local basis, all tourism actors actors (economic, social, cultural actors and local authorities and associations, etc.).

Communication and promotion of the Sahara:

- Setting up a genuine strategy for promoting the resources of the Sahara, through the organization of training courses, particularly for travel agents, hike organizers and guides. This could also take the form of notice boards in airports to raise awareness among travellers dealing with the procedures for entry to the country or through the publication of documents by the national parks on the various environments and populations in the Sahara (nature, the environment, culture, pharmacopoeia, traditions, landscapes and geology).
- Elaboration of a single major campaign for promoting the image of the multifaceted Sahara, its natural products and its tourist, biological and cultural diversity (through the cinema, literature and the memoirs of explorers, etc.). Emitting countries could take part in this funding through their specialized bodies (website, brochures, posters, exhibitions, etc.).
- Creation of a major stand on the theme of “Discovering the multifaceted Sahara” which would be erected at the major European tourism fairs and would present the rich and varied facets of the Sahara, thereby contributing to asserting the image of a new sustainable tourist destination.



The case of Timbuktu:

- Provide for the construction and equipping of an image centre to produce a “son et lumière” display of the mysteries of Timbuktu and a cultural centre enabling tourists and local populations to make a virtual visit of fragile sites before actually gaining access to them;
- Provide exhibition and reading areas at various sites, particularly in traditional cultural facilities and revive private libraries;
- Enhance traditional dance, revive traditional sewing and embroidery workshops and integrate them in tourist circuits;
- Diversify the cultural tourism service concentrated at present on the medina towards eco-tourism: the desert, the Niger River, the Gourma elephants and the lacustrine area of Faguibine.

Recommendations made by the Head of the Timbuktu cultural mission

2.2. Tour operators: towards an improvement in the quality of products on offer

Travel operators have a very important role to play insofar as they are often the link between the traveller and the place where the visit will take place.

- *Information for and raising awareness of tourism professionals and travellers: Dissemination of recommendations on the behaviour and rules to be adhered to when travelling. Operations such as these need to be developed, supported and conducted with the host countries and should also be listed in travel guides (Lonely Planet, Guide du Routard, etc.). Priority for awareness campaigns will be given to tourist guides and camel drivers.*
- *Code of conduct: The definition of a code of conduct for travel operators including equitable contracting methods and greater transparency regarding the components of travel tariffs.*

Accordingly, , a **charter of ethics for the Saharan traveller could be created**. It would encourage due respect for local populations and their integrity, together with the natural and cultural heritage. For the benefit of all players in the Saharan tourism chain (tour operators, airlines, local agencies, associations, camp sites and hotels, professional unions and national parks), the charter would underline the following items amongst others:

- *Fair pay for tourism actors: support for the creation of professional associations which would enable fair, standardized prices to be established. Institutions and professionals should work together to standardize tariffs (example: creation in 2002 of a camel-drivers' union at Tamanrasset).*
- *Promotion of traditional means of circulation: division of the Sahara into sectors inaccessible to vehicles. This would require considerable prospection work to be conducted in concertation with the creation and development of national parks and nature reserves.*
- *Logistics matching the environment: encourage the use of gas, minimize the use of wood, manage water supplies on an autonomous basis (preventing wells from being overexploited) from the towns marking the beginning of circuits.*
- *Quality of welcome: authenticity of exchange.*

This charter could be disseminated at arrival airports in the form of a poster or through documents with recommendations for travellers, at Foreign Affairs sites in the emitting countries, by tour operators in the emitting countries and by consulates which issue visas.

Wide distribution of this document to welcome tourists to the Sahara would give greater weight to the idea of a unique international geographical area, as in the case of

the Antarctic. If translated into Arabic, English and French and prepared by the countries concerned, it would enable each interested party to claim authorship. A procedure for approval of and commitment to the charter by tour operators could also be implemented.

Respect for the desert

In accordance with the spirit of the Charter of Ethics for the Traveller, five tour operators specializing in Saharan travel combined their efforts to publish a document containing information and advice for travellers. This eight-page document, distributed to their customers before departure, comprises three themes – the people, the heritage and the environment – customary behaviour and attitudes prevailing in this part of the world.

In fact, Saharan tourism is undergoing a major change with the arrival of charter flights and an increase in visits to certain areas. The signatories to this document (Terre d’Aventures, Hommes et Montagnes, Horizons Nomades, Terra Incognita and Atalante, have worked together to raise awareness among their clients and to cooperate with all tourism actors (local agencies, managers of protected areas, guides and airlines) in the various countries concerned with a view to reducing the impact of tourist visits.



Example of a document produced by members (associations and travel agents) of the Italian Association for Responsible Tourism (AITR) which provides its clients, when selling tourist trips, with a “transparency sheet” giving details of the price of the trip:

- International flight
- Local transport
- Accommodation
- Food
- Insurance
- Salary of the agency guide
- Salaries of the local guides
- Salaries of the cooks and all the local staff
- Local mark-up for the host agency
- Mark-up for the travel operator
- Money paid into local projects.

This system is very tricky to set up internally by tour operators and such a form of interference will not be readily accepted by professionals. It would seem that an intermediate, less detailed system could be introduced.

Labelling:

- *Labelling is expensive to introduce and to check. Therefore, simple solutions must be contemplated and clients must be left an opportunity to check for themselves. Tourists as such represent the pressure group which, once adequately aware, can make professionals change their attitudes.*

Creation of products adapted to the environment:

- *choosing circuits that require more unskilled labour, therefore giving priority to traditional methods of transport (camel rides or excursions), less polluting (giving preference to walking, the use of camels and limited use of 4x4 vehicles in protected areas) and limiting the use of wood to a strict minimum.*
- *developing host camps in the vicinity of those that are self-managed by the nomadic populations. Such an initiative would have to be based on financial support and the exchange and transfer of skills (suitable hygiene, respect for the environment, food, etc.).*

Transmission of know-how and financial support to local tourism actors:

- *creating local structures in partnership, giving settlement assistance to guides, training and hiring local staff, for administrative posts, as well, and launching awareness campaigns (as in the case of litter-clearance campaigns which were conducted in Algeria, co-funded by several French tour operators, several Algerian hosts and the wilaya of Djanet);*
- *levying a symbolic sum on the price of the trip to help fund projects (through a cooperation agency or partner associations).*

2.3. The hosts: training and structuring

Awareness and training:

- *respect for local populations (no exploitation of ignorance, no cultural integration or reduction of local customs to mere folklore),*
- *respect for the environment (use of gas, waste management, judicious use of water, etc.) and for the historic heritage (plundering of neolithic sites, etc.),*
- *training in negotiation and raising awareness of the difference between a quick profit and sustainable tourism;*
- *upgrading of professionals according to locally identified needs.*

Contracts with the staff: ensuring the promotion of locally-based skilled jobs and for want of full social cover, meeting health costs and accident/sickness insurance should be more systematic;

quality manufacturing methods and fair remuneration for services;

Increasing local employment, of the countries concerned: support for organizing actors into sectoral interest groups (unions for guides, professional associations and escort services);

Structuring and respect for the legal framework of the countries concerned: support for organizing actors into sectoral interest groups (unions for guides, professional associations and escort services);

Support for the self-managed development of non-permanent hosting facilities (nomadic camping facilities);

2.4. Travellers: quality actors

Raising intercultural awareness (preparation for cultural contacts) and information on the way trips are organized in order to retain a clear picture of the process involved (purchase of local services, money spent on the spot, respect for the heritage and local employment). The behaviour of tourists as shoppers is vitally important to ensure a fairer distribution of the wealth generated by tourism. Travellers should therefore be better informed and behave with greater civic spirit (avoid buying items at the lowest possible price).

Ensuring greater responsibility: Travellers contribute to ensuring sustainability through their choice of the professionals committed to sustainable tourism. The traveller who chooses equitable tourism is a responsible consumer who is aware that his attitude and behaviour can have a destabilizing impact on the host populations but that he can also, through his own involvement, contribute to the sustainable development of the area he is visiting.

Funding: The introduction of an admission tax would appear to be the best means of ensuring the protection of the heritage and the environment if such a tax were used for creating and maintaining Saharan brigades, and the creation of health and educational facilities (dispensaries and schools).

For example, in Timbuktu (Mali), an overall tax of 5,000 CFA francs per visitor has been introduced and enables the revenue from this tax to be shared between all the sites which host visitors, and to reduce the number of entrance tickets along the tourist circuit. Water and electricity bills are taken charge of by the Timbuktu municipality which also participates in hygiene improvements and manages the funds in collaboration with those in charge of sites open to tourists and members of the network.

Similarly, Saharan tourism solidarity funds could enable travellers to take part in the development of pilot projects. The proceeds from this modest levy could be paid by tour operators into a fund run by a reliable intergovernmental development agency to which projects to be funded would be submitted.

2.5. The host populations: an authentic welcome

Raising awareness of respect for and enhancement of the value of the natural and cultural heritage and of the expectations of travellers. There is growing evidence of the interest of Saharan travellers for traditional festivities and festivals. It should not be seen as an encouragement to developing mere folklore but as a means of preserving an extraordinary cultural heritage. Awareness of the need to protect the neolithic heritage, all too often sold by local people on camping sites or at markets.

Support for the creation and development of peripheral trades: Activities such as market gardening (sales of products to the economic actors of tourism, namely hotels and host staff) and craft industries (original craft products and not imported ones). These activities could be structured into workshops or cooperatives in order to limit as far as possible the number of middlemen and leave more profits in the hands of the local people.

Awareness of and support for hospitality from local inhabitants: awareness of tourist expectations: intercultural initiation, hygiene, suitable food and avoidance of folklore as well as overcharging for services.

Setting up of micro-credit facilities for the creation of small enterprises which would enable the beneficiaries to structure their endeavours and envisage the marketing of their products.

3. THE SAHARAN NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: WHAT MEASURES TO PROTECT IT AND TO ENHANCE ITS VALUE?

3.1. General measures

Institute a procedure for an impact study prior to any development of a tourism project. This procedure could be inspired by the provisions in the 1972 UNESCO Convention on the World Heritage of Humanity as well as on that of the biosphere zones in UNESCO's MAB Programme.

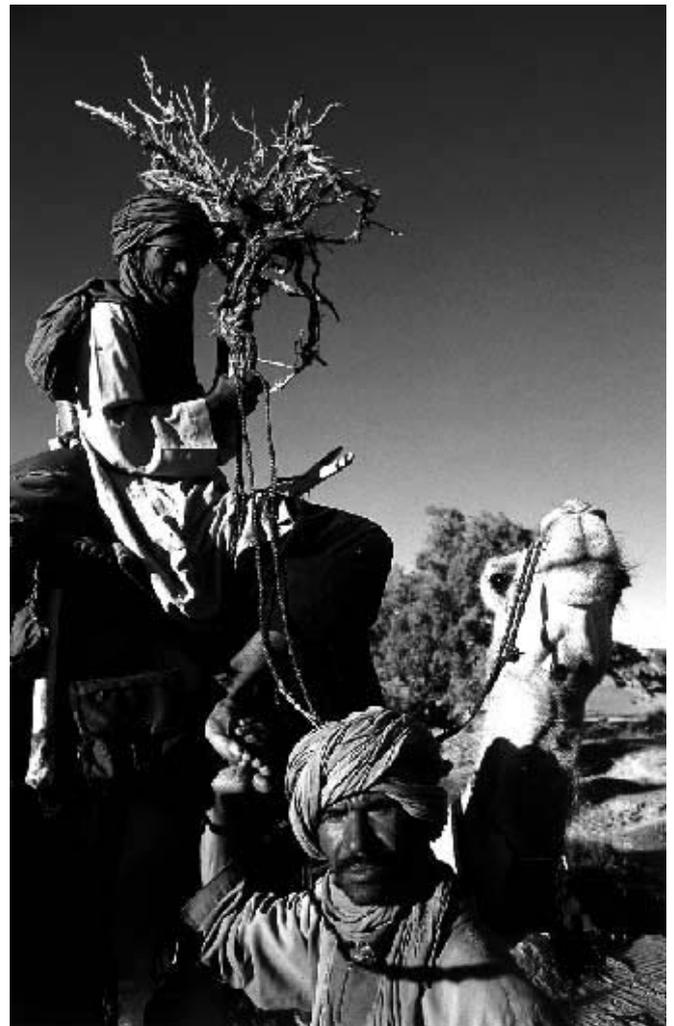
Organize research to respond to the needs of the development of cultural tourism. Such work should not only lead to specialized publications but also involve awareness-raising activities for all of society and the public authorities. However, the obstacle to such research is the scale of the task and the limited potential of specialists. World Heritage sites can be decisive in raising awareness, while museums, education and the media can also work towards that goal.

Establish a network of research centres (on the desert, biodiversity, local traditions and craft industries) to involve and combine very traditional knowledge and the advantages of modern science.

Involve the inhabitants/beneficiaries in territorial management: The notion of appropriation must be given its fullest sense as the use the populations have traditionally made of these territories, which they occupy and which they consider as "their own", have enabled their specific character to be safeguarded to varying degrees.

Use new information and communication technologies to protect the natural and cultural heritage and to ensure the safety of tourists on the sites. The military must be involved in this particular task.

Encourage the States to propose the inscription of sites (simple, mixed or transfrontier) which could be classified as World Heritage of Humanity or biosphere zones and launch candidatures for the UNESCO list of masterpieces of intangible heritage. Classification of this kind would contribute to enhancing the value of the Sahara and would be an additional asset for tourism.



3.2. The natural heritage: from the protection to the renewal of resources

3.2.1. Identify, preserve, develop

Care must be taken not to create a cleavage in this field between wild and domestic natural heritage, as the diversity which is a feature of either of them is, first and foremost, a guarantee of their survival and each of them reflects the adaptation of species to the environment. This is particularly true as some of the wild flora constitute the basis of life for shepherds, not to mention the fauna that it sustains, at all levels of the food chain.

While the technique of integral "reserves" is supposed, at least in principle, to enable the renewal of plant and wildlife species, it cannot be applied everywhere. Not only must the population be able to derive a direct benefit through consumption or an indirect benefit as an accessory to tourism, such consumption must contribute to regenerating resources provided that only reasonable demands are made on it.

Therefore, a combination can be achieved between traditional knowledge and the contribution of modern science for conducting the following types of action in the most satisfactory manner, according to Professor Pierre Rognon, scientific and technical innovation provides highly relevant prospects. In this regard, this should help to put an end to irrational practices which lead to the deterioration of the soil, eliminate wastage in the storage of water (store water in relatively shallow water tables), economize water more strictly (reduce evaporation on the surface of lakes, drainage, drip irrigation, use of polymers with a very high absorbent potential, desalination of seawater, importation of fresh water, treatment of urban waste water and manipulated rainfall techniques, etc.).

Furthermore, it is vital to:

- *Harmonise observation and early warning systems related to crops, plant cover and rainfall, implemented in each country and throughout the Sahel as a whole. In more global terms, alarm and prevention systems regarding natural disasters require harmonization, whether it be in the definition of basic data or in the method of collection and regular validation of such information.*
- *Preserve, safeguard and rehabilitate environments: These comprise areas subject to protection regardless of the related legal provisions, when they are "natural" areas (parks, reserves, etc.) and measures for rehabilitation when they are oases and settlements (water supplies,*

depollution, the fertilization of soils, etc.).

- *Protect the survival of species: Once again, this involves inventories, recognition and descriptions of endemic species which ensure the biodiversity and/or specificity of the environment, the gathering of specimens and their reproduction to ensure minimum vital numbers.*
- *Make sustainable use of biological diversity, manage scarce resources efficiently, particularly water (following the example of cooperation between Algeria, Tunisia and Libya within the Observatory of the Sahara and Sahel) and protection of species threatened with extinction;*
- *Reduce to a minimum the production of dangerous waste and limit human activities likely to have harmful effects on the ozone layer;*
- *Improve and disseminate solar energy production techniques which can be a valuable resource in the Saharan region by improving living conditions in the most remote areas and by helping to develop the service sector;*
- *Constitute a bank of species for the Sahara as a whole by involving neighbouring countries on the basis of homogeneous areas: (the ex-Ahaggar, Tassili, Akakus or the Air, Tamesna, Adrar des Ifoghas, etc.);*
- *Reconstitute the diversification of pasture by collecting seeds during the favourable seasons in order to sow them at the appropriate time or place;*
- *Develop knowledge of the plants and their medicinal qualities in order to devise an ethno-pharmacology which can enhance them and give them greater value (for medicine and for the local population), whereby they can be appreciated according to their true value;*
- *Encourage the breeding, possibly on a semi-extensive basis, of threatened species (dorcas and maned moufflons) by choosing appropriate breeding grounds (stony ground, ergs and mountainous areas);*
- *Re-examine the well network (to be deepened, cleared and equipped) according to real needs, available water supplies and their fragility;*
- *Define, in concertation with the nomads, sedentary settlements which they would like to preserve or create to permit complementary subsistence farming for the benefit of their families;*
- *Ensure the transmission of this know-how to the guides/keepers of fragile natural areas, regardless of their legal status governing protection, by recruiting young people (from school or university) on a local basis and ensuring the transfer of knowledge of that environment.*

Recommendations for a sustainable development of oases:

- Take account of the specificities of oases in all fields of public policy and respect traditional practices and customs;
- Involve participants in decision-making at local, national and international level, as in the process of decentralization;
- Strengthen the capacities by granting women their rightful place and, more particularly, guaranteeing rights and promotion in society;
- Establish public policies of national and international cooperation for the benefit of oases, particularly with regard to maintaining farm incomes and in the field of scientific research;
- Establishing specific bodies for safeguarding and developing oases;
- Implementing the conventions on biodiversity, climate change and the fight against desertification, as well as the establishment of agendas 21 regarding oases;
- Organize programmes to foster awareness of the oasis culture, particularly in school curricula and extra-scholastic activities;
- Promote and install clean, renewable energy sources.

RADD0 (Réseau Associatif de Développement Durable des Oasis)

The case of the palm groves of the M'Zab in Algeria

- Record, discuss and analyse experience acquired in the development programmes in order to draw the most effective lessons in regard to sustainability;
- Implement investigation and observation tools for gathering data and prioritizing goals;
- Classify and restore ancient or new sites (Ksour, engravings, lakes, living museums, etc.);
- Enhance and ensure training for traditional trades (data gathering, pollenization of palm trees, woodwork, etc.);
- Classify, label, transform and promote local produce, particularly the dates and Sebseb groundnuts specific to the area (date vinegar, cosmetic masks, date paste, perfume, etc.);
- Take advantage of cultural events as testimony of civilization to legitimate commercial activities and encourage creativity: example of the Mehri feast at Metlili and the date and carpet fairs at Ghardaïa.

UNDP project, Algeria



3.2.2. Protected areas

The traditional problem of protected areas is that they are faced with both remote central supervisory bodies and weak local resources (in terms of equipment and manpower). Furthermore, between central government and park administrators, there are a number of decentralized decision-makers (governors, superintendents and security services, etc.) which make problems even more difficult to manage, when such management is rarely conducted in symbiosis with the population residing in around the parks.

It would therefore be necessary to:

- Consolidate or create national parks which encourage the rational use of resources and recruit for the park offices competent conservation officials, having at their disposal a maximum quantity of information, supervisory patrols, computer equipment and financial resources (part of the admission fee charges could perhaps be paid to the guides in the form of bonuses).
- Move towards relative autonomy for the parks, that is to say, a local structure in geographical terms but national in status, enjoying a degree of managerial flexibility and able to enhance the assets of the park in agreement with the local inhabitants and authorities. That means involving the inhabitants and the administrators in safeguarding the heritage and the success of the objectives of the park while ensuring their training and promotion and giving them a socially enhanced status.
- Adapt any approach to development to the physical features of the sites and the aspirations of their occupants. Sharing experience, comparing methods aimed at depolluting the sites, restoring their fauna and flora and handling the complex problems raised by concern to protect nature and the well-being of local inhabitants should be the subject of close collaboration between neighbouring countries.
- Promote sustainable development of ecosystems: On the scale of the Sahara and given the dialectics specific to that environment, finding solutions should not be aimed at forcing circumstances to achieve an idealized or mythical "nature". On the contrary, the aim should be to reach a balance that is likely to be sustainable, that is to say, rooted in a real context with new equilibria. A fundamental concern should be to trigger the dynamics of biological diversification and the creation of conditions for restoring the biocenoses.

Example: the national reserve of Aïr and Ténéré (Niger). Recommendations:

- *Devise and implement a development plan for the reserve, consistent with the plan for the region;*
- *Envisage the creation of an ecotourism area within the reserve: define a charter for tourist development and support the creation of a specialized agency for ecotourism and cultural tourism;*
- *Apply the action programme integrating the tourist dimension of the existing strategy: communication, concertation, support for training, protection and enhancement of the heritage;*
- *Revive activities regarding the recognition and conservation of wildlife resources, particularly endangered species such as the addax, oryx algazelle, the maned moufflon, and gazelles;*
- *Develop South-South cooperation in regard of expertise, legislation, training, funding and development of Saharan tourism.*

Recommendations proposed by Mr Baba Ahmed Sanady, tourism consultant in Niger

3.3. Protect and enhance the archaeological heritage

To protect and subsequently enhance archaeological sites against deteriorating factors, various lines of action can be put forward:

- Conduct a comprehensive identification of sites and evaluate needs in terms of protection. Sites of rupestrian art are in special need of protection and copies should be produced for scientific and commercial purposes (museums).
- Prepare archaeological studies prior to major repairs. This should make it possible to identify sensitive areas and prevent their deterioration; nevertheless, it requires close collaboration with the economic actors and specialists of the Saharan areas.
- Demarcate sites: Installation of windbreaks, which would reduce the need for sand clearance and avoid rock erosion (nevertheless, it could create sand swirls which would obstruct the drainage of water, particularly in the case of rupestrian walls); the creation of symbolic limits (low walls) surrounding rupestrian artworks; signposting which would abolish the notion of terra incognita and introduce that of responsibility (signposts, brochures and rudimentary infrastructure).
- Gather together and analyse the archives (inventories and maps) in order to select potential tourist archaeological sites while continuing to conduct inventories of all the national parks which remain archaeologically unexplored. Relatively vague legislation regarding their specific role, their inadequate staff numbers, poorly trained in such work, and their meagre financial resources hinder active participation in developing archaeological knowledge.
- Develop training in Saharan archaeology. Training should cater for archaeologists in order to introduce them to Saharan specificities and enable them rapidly to acquire a command of the problems involved. It should also be offered to personnel in charge of Saharan tourism in order to develop their skills and, more particularly, facilitate the creation of a body of guides who could acquire knowledge of local history in addition to their knowledge of the terrain.
- Create “site museums” and national museums: The Saharan area only has local museums, most of which are the result of individual initiatives inspired by concern for the disappearance of objects and a desire to secure their conservation. In fact, a museum is able to play a leading role in sustainable tourism as a meeting point and a place where information can be disseminated.

If a museum provides cultural activities and workshops, it is also likely to attract a young local audience. In the Sahara, the existence of a museum can also enable tourists to spend a pleasant time during any slack periods

which may occur during tourist trips. National museums could be set up in places that attract many tourists, while regional museums could be set up at the points of departure or arrival of tourist circuits.

- At Tichitt, several excavation campaigns have focused on that situation. Action of this kind has been envisaged in the framework of the national park of Tassili n’Ajjjer for the sites of Tin Hanakaten and Mankhor, although no start has yet been made.
- Several other sites could warrant such treatment such as those that house monumental remains, like Tegdaoust, Koumbi Sahel, Assodé, Germa and the Berber Ksars on the edge of the Atlas mountains, as well as prehistoric sites whose wealth of information and remains render particularly attractive. In addition to existing projects, such as Tin Torha, Uan Muhuggiag, Tihodaine and Iwelen, or where research work in progress has been completed, Uan Afuda and Ounjougou would be particularly suitable. In cases such as Tin Terert, it would also be a means of protection.

Studying possible cooperation with oil and mining companies might prove useful in order to help fund projects for safeguarding the archaeological heritage.



Recommendation put forward by the archaeologists attending the international workshop in Ghardaïa (19-21 April 2002)
G. Annag, G. Aumassip, F. Hassan, R. Kuper

In order to protect and promote the role of archaeology for Saharan tourism as well as a unique and fragile resource to be safeguarded, measures need to be taken rapidly with a view to reducing the devastating effects of crude oil extraction, road-building, military operations and hydraulic and real estate projects:

- 1. Develop a code of ethics for Saharan tourism including visits to archaeological sites;*
- 2. Organize training programmes for guides and local communities;*
- 3. Disseminate information to travellers by every possible means in order that they become aware of the importance of preserving the sites and become involved in the management and enhancement of this cultural heritage;*
- 4. Inform and heighten awareness among politicians, travel agencies and students through the process of formal and informal education;*
- 5. Establish an institution for the Saharan cultural heritage which would assist and warn the various actors involved in tourism (travellers, tour operators, national bodies in charge of antiquities, politicians and international organizations) of the problems related to the Saharan archaeological heritage;*
- 6. Identify endangered Saharan landscapes and sites, promote conservation measures and identify resources in order to increase the tourism potential of the archaeological sites;*
- 7. Provide plans for the centres as well as techniques for the management of archaeological sites;*
- 8. Assist the Member States in the preparation of the inscription of sites classified as the World Heritage of Humanity.*

3.4. Protect and enhance the value of inhabited sites

Any measures to safeguard sites should involve action as follows:

Equip basic infrastructure to enable the local population to enjoy better living conditions and to meet the expectations of tourists

- At Ghadamès, for example, rehabilitation work is required for the electricity and telephone networks, the sewers and sanitary installations, while making use of modern techniques such as solar energy and biogas.
- In the Ksar of Ait Ben Haddou, action undertaken by the public authorities has focused on tourist expectations (architectural plans, the paving of side streets, cleaning-up operations, the consolidation of banks to the west, the building of a footbridge, and restoration of the facades of houses and important buildings such as the mosque) although no emergency work has yet been undertaken whereby displaced families could return.

Improve traditional building techniques to make them more durable and more in accordance with contemporary accommodation criteria

Meeting this challenge requires real concertation between politicians, technicians and the population to imagine both alternative techniques and architectural rehabilitation methods that would be compatible with new demands, economically accessible and respectful of architectural traditions.



Define a perimeter of protection around sites and evaluate their capacity

This should make it possible to monitor the development of urbanization and to avoid any alteration in the harmony between buildings and the natural environment which is a feature of these sites. For each particular site, and with a view to tourist visits, it is indispensable to assess the hosting capacity of villages and kasbahs and the real consequences of such tourist presence on the municipalities and local populations (creation of jobs, whether direct or indirect, fiscal revenue derived from tourism, and the effects of tourist facilities on the environment of towns in terms of streets, improved public hygiene, lighting and cultural and artistic activities).

3.5. Preserve and promote intangible heritage

Enhancing the value of knowledge – within the framework of tourism initiatives – means enhancing the value of the people who possess it, whether it be through living libraries or because their practices are of a festive and symbolic nature that might interest tourists. While it may always be possible to consider so-called desert folk as being able, in the development of tourism, to act as guides, it is nonetheless indispensable to see them as actual resources as they are the custodians of a living heritage.

Consequently, action of the following kind can contribute to safeguarding living memory:

Inventory and revitalize Saharan intangible heritage as well as local institutions that encourage the safeguarding and revitalization of intangible heritage. This should make it possible to identify existing cultures and ethnic groups in order to include them in the regional heritage and to enhance their value at national and international level; to revitalize the know-how and techniques used in traditional architecture (the Ksour) and possibly to draw up an atlas of Saharan languages under threat of extinction.

Create opportunities for the expression of folk art sustained by interregional and international competitions in order to motivate and encourage the protagonists of the cultural heritage and enable them to illustrate the value of their identity, culture and heritage; promote events which enhance the value of contemporary creation (in the field of fashion, for example).

Raise awareness among local populations and tourists of traditional locating techniques (in the field of astronomy or water, for example). This involves the preparation of field surveys, the recording of statements from local wise men, the organization of school workshops for young people under the guidance of the elderly, the publication of innovative documents (guides, narratives and films) and a brochure encouraging tourists to discover ancestral techniques and the organization of day-events on the theme of “discovering know-how”.

Identify and enhance the value of Saharan oral traditions and music. This could take the practical form of recording tales, poetry and legends on various audiovisual media. A guide on Saharan music and on its various musical instruments could be devised in the form of a CD-ROM or a written document. Steps could be taken to set up workshops for learning about Saharan music and the construction of musical instruments.

Organize an international desert festival on the basis of an international “craft industry and folk expression” day, when the Saharan populations and tourists would have an opportunity to meet every year. This interregional and international day could also focus on ancient cities (exhibitions, seminars, publication of articles, seminars for journalists, brochures, postcards and the organization of an interregional tourist circuit around these ancient cities).

Develop thematic activities focusing on human settlements: These settlements enable a given population to come together around federating activities which create jobs as in the case of Chott El Jerid (the salt desert in Tunisia) which hosts sporting events in November, “les foulées du Chott”, or a fashion parade organized in Saharan Niger. Support must be maintained for the organization of itinerant exhibitions and other cultural events (films on the Sahara, literary competitions, etc.) aimed at enhancing the reputation of the Sahara and making it better known.

Set up and support documentation centres, libraries, museums and archive services specialized in traditional and folk culture. With that aim in mind, support needs to be given to the regions, municipalities, associations and groups which deal with traditional culture.

Support the creativity and transfer of craft skills, by strengthening the activity of artisans’ cooperatives and associations, while helping craftsmen to take on apprentices. An example would be the rehabilitation of the Imzad (a musical instrument produced by Tuareg women and played by them in the Tassili and the Ahaggar) in the wilaya of Illizi and of Tamanrasset.

Accompanying measures

Nevertheless, all these measures aimed at identifying, enhancing and drawing up an inventory of the Saharan natural and cultural heritage in all its forms will only be completely fulfilled if complementary measures aimed, inter alia, at specialized research centres in the ten countries are taken; consequently, what is required is to:

- 1. Gather together, with the help of UNESCO, all written or graphic documentation disseminated outside Africa in museums and research centres so that it can be reproduced and regrouped in a common fund open to African researchers and academics, civil societies and cultural and educational institutions (with the support of institutions and research centres such as the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, the Bacht Institute, the Desert Research Centre, the Déserts du Monde Foundation, etc.).*
- 2. Create visual and sound recording banks for the purpose of enhancement (following the example of the research centre on orality in Niamey) and bring together copies of documentation of all kinds produced on the Sahara, its typical natural environments, peoples, cultures and history.*
- 3. Respect all comparative research procedures aimed at enabling historians of Africa and the Sahara to reconstruct the traces of links, exchanges, influences and shared endeavours between the countries and peoples which hold the Sahara in joint ownership.*
- 4. Include the teaching of Saharan history in the school syllabuses of the ten countries. The Sahara has played a sufficiently important role in history for it not to be excluded although, for the time being, it is not mentioned in any teaching course. This oversight can be made up for, in primary education, by recourse to a number of evocative pictures and brief commentaries, and in secondary education, by a few paragraphs introducing adaptation phenomena.*

4. ERADICATION OF POVERTY: STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES WHICH GENERATE SOCIAL RECOGNITION AND INCOME

4.1. Develop and enhance natural and cultural productions

The aim is to strengthen the position of the Saharan populations, particularly the poorest of them, in the process of preservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage and to improve their living conditions. This therefore requires support, particularly for women, in the twofold perspective of fair trading – which guarantees fair pay – and the code of ethics which ensures that all the actors involved (whether producers or consumers) respect the heritage.

Saharan tourism, if it is to endure, offers a major opportunity for the direct or indirect enhancement of local resources. Creating thematic tourist circuits on the basis of natural and cultural resources would therefore seem to be of great interest. In the circumstances, the fact that settlements and oases should have operated as isolated units has generated very specific, even unique agricultural products. There is a great diversity of wheat strains, dates, peaches, pears and vegetables of great biodiversity.

Enhancing the value of such resources, whether they be fresh or processed natural produce, or craft products, will be one of the keys to the eradication of poverty insofar as it will require the creation of jobs in the long term for the populations, thereby enabling them to satisfy their needs and to meet the expectations of visiting tourists. The profits derived from tourism activities can then be reinvested in development action controlled by the host communities. The notion of enhancement of resources takes on various dimensions:

- **Enhance inputs (water, soil, plant and animal species) in order to develop production**

Studying techniques for the renewal and enrichment of soils through the contribution of virgin soil (known as hdeb) and natural fertilizers to perfect them for strictly biological agriculture.

Implementing techniques for economizing water through the use of drip irrigation and the purification of waste water thanks to auto-purification methods (filtering, reservoirs and the use of purifying plants).

Producing plant compost to enrich soils with domestic waste (vegetables and cereals), and farm compost and natural (spontaneous) vegetation, to enrich the organic composition of soils.

- **Enhance the value of fresh produce which can generate income**

Recognizing rustic cultivated varieties with a view to their conservation, multiplication and rejuvenation: strains of grains, dates and various types of fruit (pomegranates, peach trees, vines, fig trees and even olive trees).

- *Nefta is famous for its Deglet nour dates which are harvested in November. The date is an appreciable source of income and could become a tourist commodity along that theme.*

Technical assistance to set up tree nurseries (conservation, multiplication) for the purpose of replanting or extending plantation areas and learning techniques related to grafting and drip irrigation, etc.

Improving methods of conservation by drying or freezing through the creation of small-scale structures (making use possibly of solar energy) to limit production losses for want of conservation facilities as has already been observed.

Awarding of the “organic” label: the methods (utilization of virgin soil brought from the desert, animal compost, etc.) are the basis for truly natural products which fully deserve the “organic” label. This label could be extended, firstly, to potential new crops – particularly out-of-season or early crops – (strawberries in Niger, watermelon and vegetables), and, secondly, early conservation techniques for products in demand abroad (salted and dried tomatoes).

- **Enhance processed produce (vegetables, dried fruit and cheeses)**

Regenerate palm groves and develop intensive stock-breeding: date palm cultivation, market-gardening and stock-breeding should provide a basis for stabilizing the local economy. This requires the rational management of the water supply, proper treatment for palm trees, the improvement of yields, the introduction of fruit trees and the diversification of market-garden crops.

- *The Tafyoucht cooperative in Morocco produces argan oil as well as a series of by-products which include amlou, a traditional mixture composed of almonds and argan oil, and cosmetics produced solely from natural ingredients. The success of this project is dependent on its roots in regional tradition, the desire to preserve an essential element of the natural heritage and, at the same time, its requirement of quality.*

Stock-breeding provides an indispensable protein supplement to the diet provided by agriculture. Goat and ewe's milk is traditionally used for producing a dry cheese which is consumed during the dry season and is sold.

- *Attempts have already been made (Tassili, Air) to help women to develop this activity on the understanding that their product can be sold even in towns.*

- *The traditional production of Takamart cheese deserves to be rehabilitated.*

Another type of stock-breeding could be revived by central government, specialized NGOs and environmental protection offices. It concerns species (birds in particular) with a view to gradually repopulated biotopes emptied by drought and poaching

- *The species include the partridge, the bustard and, in certain conditions, the ostrich, which have already been the object of considerable activity in Niger and Mali, and even in Tunisia.*

- **Enhance the cultural heritage, particularly craft industries**

Recreate craft industries that are likely to produce a supplementary monetary income through the availability of materials from principal activities such as wool, goat or camelhair, hides, etc. Women, in particular, need to be helped to keep up the traditional techniques of local craft industries such as pottery and wall painting.

- *In the southern Saharan countries, particularly in Mali and Mauritania, the craft industry sector has led to significant initiatives such as that of the cooperative of widowed craftswomen of Sabaligougou and that of weavers of Ségou which constitute the most successful pilot experiments in Mali.*

- *Experiments launched particularly in Mauritania, around sites classified as part of the world heritage also deserve to be mentioned. At Chinguetti, for example, the owners of manuscripts were able to resist the temptation of selling off their heritage, a veritable cultural asset that is emblematic of the region, and envisage creating libraries which would bring together the diverse fragments of this rich heritage, thereby contributing to making it better known while creating new tourist attractions.*

Extend the "Sahara" label, which guarantees the quality of natural products ranging from the materials used in craft industries to the authenticity of what is produced.

- *Three years ago, a women's cooperative was set up in the foothills of the Moroccan Sahara to revive the ancestral techniques of local weavers by adapting them to new demands and by improving the equipment and raw materials (for example, sabra, the aloe fibre with many shades of colour). Each high-quality item is unique. It is produced to order and to specified measurements from among 600 colour references. The pigment used is natural.*

Help local producers to have access to raw materials and ensure that measures are taken to protect the quality of the products and the interests of the producers.

4.2. Participation, training, working in networks: the keys to success

• Opening up to the outside world, developing cooperatives

Projects can only develop when opened up to the outside world as the phenomenon of poverty is the result of the isolation of which the populations of these regions are victims. If tourism can provide leverage for development, it is because it can act as a catalyser for the exchange of experience and know-how.

Cooperatives should provide a favourable opportunity for the exchange of experience, otherwise they will remain confined in their function of food subsistence and will never be able to become innovative or competitive. Enhancing and supporting know-how, particularly that of women in the craft industries, will require a task of transmission and marketing. Regional and international exhibitions will constitute privileged promotional forums.

When setting themselves up as a cooperative, women can re-establish the social link, the idea of “working together”, the spearhead of any participatory commitment. It is community solidarity which is the strength that can ensure the durability of their projects. Through their collective endeavours, women can tackle not only the financial but also the institutional and cultural obstacles which hamper their autonomy.

Organizing work on a cooperative basis can also help to limit the number of middlemen between the creators and their customers and thereby increase direct income. These opportunities for expression, relationships and social development should enable those concerned to deal on an equal footing with the institutions and the authorities to become key figures in fair trading networks.

Exemple: Creation of small agricultural units run by village cooperatives which provide support for the breeding of goats which are very prolific in the north-western and eastern regions of the country, white short-haired sheep, ostriches and gazelles at Oualata

• Being at the heart of decision-making

Furthermore, steps must be taken to ensure that the financial structure of contributions to tourism and their geographical distribution are modified in order to benefit the local populations by ensuring that the proceeds from sales actually go back to the populations (producers). What is required is to undertake multidimensional action for the benefit of the most socially vulnerable populations (dependents without herds and farmers without land, wife or children) who experience

every form of poverty (in terms of material circumstances, food, health and education).

Beyond decentralization measures undertaken by most of the States, these populations must be given the opportunity to express themselves directly as to their priority needs and their choice of organization while being considered as strategic actors in development. In this regard, recommendations must be made to administrations, national scientific bodies and development bodies to rely on official structures, particularly associations, to enhance local expertise, particularly with regard to the choice of solutions. This would contribute to preventing the failure of certain projects which are not inspired in any way by the populations concerned and do not contribute to preventing the harmful effects of tourism development, such as an increase in the cost of living for local populations, which may lead them to leave their places of origin.

Local associations can bring their expertise into play and create consumption networks with the countries of the North and thereby help to preserve moral and material rights. A consultation could be conducted along those lines with public and private institutions working in the field of poverty eradication in order to identify positive practices and encourage their wider use.

• Welcoming and involving tourists⁽¹⁾

As regards accommodation facilities set up by the local populations, there is evidence to suggest that while “meeting new faces” lies at the heart of a strategy for the development of sustainable tourism, it would acquire greater effectiveness and merit if it were based on more authentic contact and took on more original forms.

In addition to welcoming and accommodating tourists in Bedouin tents, on campsites, and in bed-and-breakfast facilities, which are respectful of the architecture of traditional housing, tourists can be invited to share in the daily life and lifestyle of the local population, by taking part in the harvesting of dates, by learning about irrigation techniques for oasis dwellers, and discovering and experiencing the pastoral life for nomads involving transhumance and animal welfare, particularly for dromedaries.

Short-term accommodation for tourists should be developed and managed in an autonomous manner with precise regulations in order to encourage local participation and investment within the context of national concertation.

(1) For examples of exemplary action, see Annex 7.

• Promoting micro-credits

Many women's initiatives have been largely supported and funded by the micro-credit system. While it may have seemed for many of them to be an unexpected blessing, on account of their exclusion from traditional financial circuits, it should nevertheless offer truly promising prospects. Loans of this kind are often for the purpose of a sinking fund or the acquisition of light equipment, and can be reimbursed over a short period at relatively high interest rates. This financial approach, which involves applying high interest rates to cover the operating costs of the body managing the micro-credit, reduces its effectiveness.

The system of micro-credits should facilitate the setting up of durable, coordinated activities, accompanied by adequate preliminary training and sufficient technical assistance. It should also stimulate the saving capacity of the very poor to encourage the emergence of more carefully structured women's enterprises, capable of breaking out of the informal sector so as to enrich the local economic fabric.

• At Djanet, for example, weaving workshops have been developed thanks to the initial introduction of vital equipment – looms and wool – and the expertise of an instructor; after two years, the workshops became widely recognized and the best women workers were invited to teach at the technical college in which a weaving section was created. In the same way, systems of mutual assistance should be developed and women's domestic chores be reduced.

Furthermore, the system of micro-credits must imperatively be opened up to rural society and coordinate its endeavours with the NGOs, development associations working in the field and governmental bodies and departments involved in the eradication of poverty, in order to devise a common intervention strategy.

• Adapt training and teaching

Training centres should be set up and adapted to the patterns of organization of the target populations. A careful study of working hours according to employment (tending the animals, milking, cooking, etc.), sex and age can help to introduce suitably adapted teaching techniques, as well as for those children who have to work for the benefit of their families.

Simple equipment (personal computers, even old ones, CD players), consumer goods (program CDs) and energy through solar equipment can expand the number of courses available with the help of a supervisor. Access to the Internet should also be developed particularly for the benefit of young people. What matters fundamentally is to reduce illiteracy, and to launch action in favour of development (agriculture and stock-

breeding) and public health, as well as awareness of the heritage, rather than longer courses, so that women and girls can be catered for too. Preference should be given, in this regard, to functional literacy cycles to provide a command of basic vocabulary designating people's environment, their activities and their choices in life rather than academic schooling as aimed at children.

The reappropriation of the past and the reconstruction of an identity while avoiding any trivial folklore status are priorities which can be achieved through highly practical training endeavours such as participation in preliminary surveys and inventories of natural and cultural heritage; in this way, the population is made aware of the fragility and value of its heritage and can involve itself in action to enhance its value. The Imzad, for example, had virtually disappeared among the Tuareg and has now acquired new impetus as a result of events and training courses held at Ilizy. The development of pharmacopoeia through traditional medicine and the weaving of camelhair are other specific examples of what can be the subject of training courses.

CONCLUSION

If a conclusion is to be drawn from what has been said above, it should not be a curtain call but, on the contrary, an overture to the future. What lesson have we learned from what initially seemed to be but a mass of rock or an ocean of sand? The answer is that it is all a matter of subtlety in these vast territories: the delicate balance of the oasis ecosystem and the tricky relationships between men and a universe that is singularly fine, threatening, colourful and grandiose.

We might well be tempted to brandish the famous Tunisian tourism slogan, “Tunisia also means people” and add that “sustainable tourism is, first and foremost, a question of people”. This formula is accurate enough if we bear in mind that sustainable tourism does not claim to be a mono-activity. In this instance, it is considered to be one of the factors which can increase resources for the benefit of populations, particularly the poorest.

Going beyond the stage of safeguarding and maintaining in order to reach, in some instances, towards reconstituting, even reconstructing the natural and cultural heritage is an ambitious objective whereby any proposal or decision should focus, first and foremost, on the peoples of the desert. There is an obvious link between sustainable tourism and the reaffirmation of the basic rights of populations, particularly those that are most fragile, that are most exposed to losing everything as they have lost every right (to the point of sinking into non-existence).

The countries which share the Sahara can, whether they wish to adopt guiding or binding formulas, work their way towards strengthening their cooperation, such is the synergy on the national and subregional level that it conveys, indeed a fundamental condition for sustainable development.

In view of the importance of the field of study which encompasses these ten countries, the diversity of local circumstances, the complex socio-political conditions, the fragility of the ecosystems and the difficulty of access to them, the proposals put forward in this document are all aimed at the feasibility and efficiency of human endeavours for the benefit of the inhabitants of this immense and diverse subcontinent that is called the Sahara. In fact, recognition of cultural diversity⁽¹⁾, as a source of enrichment and development, proves that the States which share the Sahara are blessed with the peoples and their cultures that unite them and bring them closer together beyond the limits of their borders.

Therefore, the plan “Towards a strategy for the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara in the context of poverty eradication” offers the opportunity to all the actors who so wish to join together to advocate respectful and enhancing development, to rehabilitate the values of cultural heritage and to eradicate poverty in all its forms in order to ensure that the Sahara has its rightful place among the heritages of universal value. This project could thereby constitute an exemplary application of the conclusions of the Johannesburg Summit, of which the ten States could be rightfully proud.

(1) In accordance with UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2002).



GHARDAÏA DECLARATION

21 april 2003

The participants at the international workshop organized within the context of the project “Towards a strategy for the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara in the context of poverty eradication” meeting from 19 to 21 April 2003 at Ghardaïa (Algeria), at the initiative of UNESCO, in cooperation with the Déserts du Monde Foundation and the participation of representatives from ALECSO, UNDP, WTO, UNEP, ILO and OSS,

Consider that tourism should be a lever for sustainable development and the fight against poverty and that the proposed strategy for the tourist enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage contributes to dialogue between the cultures and civilizations and to strengthening the values of solidarity and peace in the region,

Consider that the integrated, subregional, multidisciplinary approach to the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara is the only one which can encourage the quest for solutions to the question of reducing poverty among the populations in the Sahara – for better access to education, training and scarce but necessary commodities such as water, for greater participation in cultural and social life, and in safeguarding the cultural and natural heritage and its enhanced value through tourism under the control of the populations of the Sahara,

Consequently,

Support the project “Towards a strategy for the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara in the context of poverty eradication”, discussed at the workshop, as reflected in the Millennium Speech by the United Nations Secretary-General, and the follow-up to the Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (September 2002) and the Plan of Action of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity,

Draw to the attention of the governments of the ten countries which share the Sahara, as well as the inter-governmental organizations, associations, tourism enterprises and all the actors involved in safeguarding and enhancing the tourist value of the cultural and natural heritage, to the relevance of the proposed strategy by recommending them to give it their support through the appropriate means, particularly via an integrated, ethical approach, and, more especially, by strengthening cooperation in the fields concerned and giving support to the follow-up activities of the workshop.

PLAN OF ACTION(I)

Preamble:

Tourism has become one of the most important economic activities and one of the principal vectors of cultural exchange. There has been a constant increase in the number of tourists visiting the Sahara or attracted by that destination. When conceived as one of the instruments in the service of the sustainable development of the Sahara, tourism can and should contribute to the preservation and the enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage, and the eradication of poverty, particularly through the creation of directly or indirectly related jobs and the improvement of access to information and training.

The management of Saharan tourism in which ethics and quality are paramount can be achieved through cooperation at international, subregional and national levels aimed at heightening awareness and encouraging a more responsible approach among tourism actors to the importance of respecting and enhancing the cultural and natural heritage to be handed on to future generations and of reinforcing the values of solidarity and peace in the region.

Overall methodology and methods

The activities listed below will be implemented within the context of intellectual, technical and financial partnerships established with the agencies of the United Nations, WTO, UNDP and UNEP in particular, with ALECSO and OSS, with and between governments, the public and private sectors and the relevant institutions, associations and Foundations, particularly the Déserts du Monde Foundation, and the populations at local, national, regional and international levels. The populations concerned and local officials will be considered to be the strategic actors of development. The international consultative network for the project will be consolidated and steering committees could be created at national and subregional levels according to specific needs and priorities.

Measures of a general nature:

Elaboration of an instrument of subregional cooperation (declaration, convention: degree of commitment to be defined) focusing on the strategy for the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara in the context of poverty eradication;

Support for the training of the various actors involved in Saharan tourism in terms of existing codes of conduct and charters;

Support for local bodies and international centres in the Sahara the role of which is to promote research, disseminate scientific information and training programmes, and alert international public opinion where necessary, particularly through the creation of a portal thereby making all information and action available via a network.

Specific measures

• Eradication of poverty

Poverty is defined as social, cultural and economic exclusion and deprivation of the most fundamental rights. In that perspective, effective participation of populations, particularly women and young people, will be encouraged in the conception, implementation and evaluation of tourism programmes and policies, according to the priorities they themselves have determined. The financial spin-offs of tourism will have to be equitably shared in order to cover the costs of protection and management of the heritage, as well as to improve the living conditions of the populations and, more particularly, access to essentials such as water, food, housing and education.

Actions

- *Study of the psycho-social factors of poverty in the Sahara in the context of the sustainable development of tourism.*
- *Support for micro-credits: improvement of the investment plans of the communities in the medium and long term, support for the promotion of income-generating activities, particularly for the benefit of women.*
- *Training courses in project development and management (heightening awareness of the principles of sustainable tourism, improvement of the quality of supply and diversification of the products, etc.).*
- *Enhancement and establishment of a network of tourism-related experience and products contributing directly to the eradication of poverty, particularly through the new information and communication technologies and local radio stations.*

• **Natural and cultural heritage**

The development of sustainable tourism necessarily involves the conservation and enhancement of the Saharan natural and cultural heritage, which is a resource that is both tangible and spiritual. Tourism development projects should take account of the aesthetic, social and cultural dimensions of the natural and cultural heritage.

Every infrastructure project should be preceded by consultations and impact studies, particularly regarding rare and fragile resources. As far as buildings are concerned, preference will be given to local materials and due consideration for local architectural features. Promotion of cultural diversity will involve the promotion of the intangible heritage including measures to support creativity in the fields of arts and crafts and living artistic expression.

Actions

Instruments to assist in decision-making:

- *Improvement of risk prevention and management in Saharan destinations, particularly through the use of new information and communication technologies: improvement of observation and early-warning systems in the field of the environment (prevention of natural disasters and pollution) and greater security for cultural assets (safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage).*
- *Concertation among those in charge of the Saharan cultural and natural heritage on a programme of cooperation to ensure better identification, preservation and promotion of that heritage; harmonization or conventions, proposals of measures and improvement of impact study provisions.*

Pilot projects:

- *Conservation and integrated tourism development of a transfrontier reserve (biosphere reserve/nature park): inventory and preservation of the wildlife and the archaeological heritage, implementation of an ecotourism circuit encouraging the development of the area.*
- *Identification and proposals for the inscription on single, mixed and transfrontier sites which could be classified as part of the World Heritage of Humanity and applications for the UNESCO list of masterpieces of the intangible heritage.*
- *Protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage: identification of sites, tools for assisting in the management and enhancement of sites, training and information for the populations and tourists.*
- *Support for the promotion of the intangible heritage within the framework of a desert festival.*

• **Sustainable cultural tourism**

The active cooperation of the partners involved in Saharan tourism in the conception and implementation of tourism policies and programmes is vital for seeking novel, sustainable responses to the challenges of Saharan tourism. Similarly essential is the mobilization of capacities at local level and the role of local authorities in seeking to establish a balanced situation as required for ensuring the sustainability of tourism.

Programmes to heighten awareness of the cultural, environmental and social issues at stake in tourism will be organized for the tourism actors, both public and private, as well as for the local populations and tourists. The training of local actors and professionals, and the creation of labels and standards for tourism services will have a determining effect on the quality of tourism and the success of the tourism experience of visitors.

Actions :

Instruments to assist in decision-making:

- *Prospective market study on Saharan tourism by WTO: measurement of tourist flows, development conditions and analysis and typology of clientele.*
- *Adaptation, dissemination and implementation of the WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism which will commit public authorities, tourism enterprises, tour operators, hosts, guides, NGOs and tourists. Promotion of specific charters as instruments of concertation and cooperation.*

Des projets pilotes :

- *Development and enhancement of innovative transfrontier thematic circuits devised as instruments for local and tourist development:*
 - *the Ksour route: rehabilitation of traditional houses in the Ksour as quality-guaranteed tourist accommodation (guest houses, gîtes and cultural centres);*
 - *the gold route, the ink route: revival of mythical circuits and enhancement of the value of traditional trades and local industry;*
 - *discovery of the Tuareg culture through the musical and oral cultural heritage.*
- *Support for a campaign to promote the Saharas in the context of the year of the deserts, highlighting through a joint promotional campaign all the diversity of the areas and specificities of the products ("Discovering the Saharas" stand; itinerant exhibition).*

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Dallol-Bosso-2907888218.html - 12k

Les Wolofs les Lébous les Peuls les Toucouleurs les Sérères

www.musee-manega.bf/fr/habitats/ habitatpeul/habitatpeul.htm - 8k

Niger

www.abm.fr/fiche/nigerficf.html - 31k

Nomades du Sahel les Peuls Bororos Bororo (Peuple d'Afrique)

www.my-livres-marche.com/ Loncke-Sandrine-Durou-Nomades-
du-Sahel-les-Peu-2719105295.html - 11k

Sahara néolithique - peuls

ennedi.free.fr/peul.html - 47k

Touaregs "Voix de Femmes" au Niger

www.sosfaim.be/Defis-Sud/ds52/ds52_touaregs.pdf

UNESCO

http://www.unesco.org

UNESCO/MAB

http://www.unesco.org/mab

UNESCO/MOST

http://www.unesco.org/most

Patrimoine mondial

http://whc.unesco.org/nwhc.fr/pages/home/pages/homepage.htm

OMT/WTO

http://www.world-tourism.org

OUA

http://www.oau-oua.org

PNUD/UNDP

http://www.undp.org

PNUE

http://www.unep.net

UNICEF

http://www.unicef.org

Banque mondiale/World Bank

http://www.worldbank.org

IRMC

http://www.irmcmaghreb.org

ALECSO

http://www.slis.uwm.edu/alecso/Default.htm

ISESCO

http://www.isesco.org.ma

OSS

http://www.unesco.org/oss

OCDE

http://www1.oecd.org/dev/cendev/index.htm

ICOMOS

http://www.icomos.org

ICOM

http://www.icom.org

ICCROM

http://www.iccrom.org

Organisation des villes du patrimoine mondial

http://www.ovpm.org/index.asp

ANNEX 1

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

1. Title

“The Sahara of cultures and people” Towards a strategy for the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara, in the context of combating poverty.

2. Region

The Saharan states (Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, Tunisia)

3. Partnership

Member States, United Nations Agencies (WTO, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF), ALECSO, BITS, Foundation Déserts du monde, Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel, Barth Institute, Desert Research Centre, Scientific Programmes of UNESCO (MAB and MOST), Tours Operators, Tourism Offices, IGOs, NGOs, etc.

4. Justification

Following the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000, all agencies of the United Nations system are required to contribute as a priority to the struggle against poverty and extreme poverty. In this context, UNESCO's General Conference, at its 31st session (November 2001), adopted the intersectoral project “The Sahara of cultures and people”.

The project falls also in line with the follow-up of the World Summit on Eco-Tourism held in Quebec, Canada (19-22 May 2002), of the Rio+10 Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa (26 August - 4 September 2002), of the WTO global code of ethics on tourism and of the Plan of action of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

As a crosscutting activity, tourism can be a real tool in sustainable development and struggle against poverty, in particular in the Sahara which is a desertic ecosystem, characterised by a rich cultural, human and natural wealth, and a great fragility.

5. Objectives

General objectives:

- Preserve Saharan cultural and natural heritage for future generations.
- Promote tourism as a tool in favour of the struggle against poverty and enhancement of the heritage.
- Involve the local communities in the tourism development of their regions.
- Implementing touristic projects with ethics and solidarity and that are economically efficient
- Reinforce cooperation between Saharan States and develop exchanges between Countries of the South and the North

Specific objectives:

- Networking and development of touristic products
- Mobilise, sensitise, and train the tourism actors (institutions, host populations, tourists), in priority women and young people
- Identify, protect and enhance the Saharan heritage (archaeological, architectural, protected areas, classified sites, know-how, etc.) .

6. Methodology

Phase 1: 2002

- Round table: launching of the project (Sidi Bou Saïd, Tunisia, April 2002)
- Diagnostic: 7 thematic field studies (environment, tourism, cultural heritage, poverty and local populations, co-operation tools)
- Meeting of experts, July 2002

Phase 2: 2003

- Elaboration of the sub-regional Strategy
- International Workshop (Ghardaïa, Algeria, April 2003)
- Conception of the plan of action 2004/2005
- Communication on the project (brochure, Video, Web site, Forums, etc.)
- Launching of the first pilot project: “The roads of the Ksour”

Phase 3: 2004/2005

- Implementation of the plan of action (Saharan touristic circuits, Network of Saharan cities, co-operation programme, training/raising awareness, Communication, promotion, marketing)
- Fund raising
- Animation of the international Network

Issues addressed:

- The outlook for tourism development and how it will affect employment: what jobs and training opportunities will there be and for whom?
- The role of tourism industry professionals and travelers in the sustainable development of tourism in the Sahara: what kind of trips should be promoted and what form should professional cooperation with local populations take?
- Tourist development and the human environment: how can the participation of local populations be improved and poverty reduced?
- The cultural and natural heritage in the face of tourism: how can it be better identified, protected and promoted?
- Saharan tourism policies: guidelines for a sustainable development strategy and proposals for cooperation measures.

7. Results

- Sensitising Member States on the principles of ethic tourism with solidarity dimension in the context of combating poverty.
- Mobilisation and development of the Network of the project, at a sub-regional and international level and improvement of exchanges capacities.
- Elaboration of the intergovernmental strategy in cooperation with Member States, ONG, OIG, Tour Operators, Associations, Populations.
- Validation of the plan of action 2004/2005.
- Promotion and launching of the programme through pilot-projects and actions aimed at enhancing heritage, developing tourism and struggle of poverty.

ANNEX 2

World Heritage sites in the Sahara

ALGERIA	1982 Tassili N'Ajjer	1982 M'Zab Valley	
EGYPT	1979 Ancient Thebes with its Necropolis	1979 Memphis and its Necropolis - the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur	2002 Saint Catherine Area
LIBYA	1985 Rock-art Sites of Tadrart Acacus	1988 Old Town of Ghadamès	
MALI	1988 Old Towns of Djenné	1988 Timbuktu	1989 Cliffs of Bandiagara (Land of the Dogons)
MAURITANIA	1989 Banc D'Arguin National Park	1996 The Ancient Ksour of Ouadane, Chinguetti, Tichitt and Oualata	
MOROCCO	1987 Ksar of Ait-Ben-Haddou		
NIGER	1991 Air and Ténéré Natural Reserves	1996 W National Park of Niger	

Biosphere reserves in the Sahara

ALGERIA	1986 Tassili N' Ajjer		
EGYPT	1993 Wadi Allaqi		
MOROCCO	1998 Arganeraie	2000 Oasis, South Marocain	
NIGER	1997 Air and Ténéré		

ANNEX 3

CONVENTIONS SIGNED/RATIFIED PER COUNTRY

Convention/country	Algeria	Chad	Egypt	Libya	Mauritania
Biodiversity	S/R	S/R	S/R	S	S/R
Climate Change	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Desertification	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Endangered Species	S/R	S/R	S/R	-	S/R
Environmental Modification	S/R	-	S/R	-	-
Hazardous Wastes	S/R	-	S/R	-	S/R
Law of the Sea	S/R	S	S/R	S	S/R
Ozone Layer Protection	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Ship Pollution	S/R	-	S/R	-	S/R
Wetlands	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Nuclear Test Ban	S	S/R	S/R	S	S/R
Marine Dumping	-	S	S/R	S/R	-
Marine Life Conservation	-	-	-	-	-
Climatic change/kyoto	-	-	S/R	-	-
Tropical Timber 93 & 94	-	-	S/R	-	-

Convention/country	Mali	Morocco	Niger	Sudan	Tunisia
Biodiversity	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Climate Change	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Desertification	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Endangered Species	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Environmental Modification	-	S	S/R	-	S/R
Hazardous Wastes	S/R	S/R	S/R	-	S/R
Law of the Sea	S/R	S	S	S/R	S/R
Ozone Layer Protection	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Ship Pollution	-	S/R	-	-	S/R
Wetlands	S/R	S/R	S/R	-	S/R
Nuclear Test Ban	S	S/R	S/R	S/R	S/R
Marine Dumping	-	S/R	-	-	S/R
Marine life Conservation	-	-	-	-	S
Climate Change /Kyoto	S	-	S	-	-
Whaling	-	S/R	-	-	-

ANNEX 4

TOURISM: COUNTRY TYPOLOGY

Group 1: Egypt – Morocco – Tunisia

This group comprises those Saharan countries where tourism is most developed and carefully structured.

International tourist arrivals (in thousands) and international revenue (in millions of United States dollars)

Source: WTO, IMF database "World Economic Outlook", April 2001. International database US Bureau of the Census

Country	1998	1999	2000
Morocco			
Tourist arrivals	3242	3817	4113
Revenue	1712	1880	2040
Tunisia			
Tourist arrivals	4718	4832	5057
Revenue	1557	1563	1496

In 2001, Morocco experienced an increase of 3.2% with 4.5 million tourist arrivals, and a rise in revenue of 28.3%, i.e. US \$2 billion. (Source: Ministry of the Economy, Finance, Privatization and Tourism)

The tourism sector is the second source of foreign currency for the country and generates 650,000 jobs, either directly or indirectly, that is to say 5.8% of the working population. Saharan tourism is an integral part of rural tourism which caters for 120,000 visitors annually, of whom essentially 60% visit desert destinations. The desert accounts for the development of ecotourism as a form of travel.

Tunisia is the leading tourism country in North Africa. The potential of Saharan tourism is abundantly illustrated by specifically Saharan products (the region of Gafsa, the oases of Tozeur, the troglodyte area of Matmata, Douz and the national park of Jbil) or combined with coastal tourism in the form of day excursions leaving from the island of Djerba. Egypt is a country where tourism has been able to overcome numerous difficulties related to political upheavals and has maintained a certain pace of tourism development, particularly in the desert where the Sinai has become a real destination in its own right.

Group 2: Algeria – Mauritania – Niger – Libya

This group comprises countries which today can be classified as being potential destinations during the next 10 years.

International tourist arrivals (in thousands) and international revenue (in millions of United States dollars)

Source: WTO, IMF database "World Economic Outlook", April 2001. International database US Bureau of the Census

Country	1998	1999	2000
Algeria			
Tourist arrivals	678	749	866
Revenue	24	...	...
Mauritania			
Tourist arrivals	...	24	...
Revenue	20	28	...
Niger			
Tourist arrivals	42	43	50
Revenue	18	24	...
Libya			
Tourist arrivals	...	...	...
Revenue	...	...	...

Group 3: Sudan – Mali – Chad

These countries have made substantial efforts to develop tourism and have demonstrated political determination in fostering the development of sustainable tourism.

International tourist arrivals (in thousands) and international revenue (in millions of United States dollars)

Source: WTO, IMF database "World Economic Outlook", April 2001. International database US Bureau of the Census

Country	1998	1999	2000
Mali			
Tourist arrivals	83	87	91
Revenue	50	50	50
Tchad			
Tourist arrivals	41	47	44
Revenue	10	...	...
Sudan			
Tourist arrivals	38	39	50
Revenue	2	2	...

NB:As it is included in overall tourism activities, the actual share of Saharan tourism in the data above remains unknown.

ANNEX 5 CHARTER FOR VISITORS TO THE NATIONAL PARK OF BANC D'ARGUIN

We are pleased to welcome you to our village. We would draw your attention to the following recommendations which have been defined by the whole of the Imraguen community residing within the Park, in the hope that they may facilitate your stay and make it as pleasant as possible.

Alcohol

You are in a Muslim country where the consumption of alcohol is not authorized. You are kindly asked not to give any alcohol to members of the community, especially children. If you wish to consume any alcohol you have brought with you, we would advise you to do so in a place outside the village.

Dress

You are advised to dress properly during your stay in our village so as not to embarrass members of our community. Arms, waistline and legs should be covered and women should be dressed entirely in loose-fitting clothes.

Photography

For souvenir photos, please be kind enough to ask the person you wish to photograph if they mind you doing so. For professional photographs for subsequent sale, please refer the matter to the village chief. We would like to know how and where the photos will be displayed and benefit from some copies of the photos or reporting feature. In your country, you pay people for posing for photographs. We would kindly ask you, in exchange for the photos you have taken of our village, to make a financial contribution to one of our community projects.

Bins

Please take away your litter with you. It was you who brought these full containers, therefore it is not too much to ask you to take them back empty. Do not bury litter, as jackals and hyenas are likely to dig it up. Our village is in the middle of the desert, in a very fragile environment, and we do not yet have any appropriate places for processing waste.

Children

Our children will naturally be tempted to ask you for presents when they see you. Please do not encourage begging as it distorts any contact that you might have with them. Please refrain from giving them cigarettes, money, sweets, clothes and key rings.

Accommodation

You will be able to spend the night in our village. Would you please make an application in advance and book your accommodation through the PNBA management in Nouakchott. We will set up Khaimas or traditional Mauritanian tents outside our village. We would encourage you to rent tents rather than bring your own. In this way, you will create additional income which will be much appreciated by the community and will enable us to rely less on fishing.

Other forms of accommodation, such as the community home, bed and breakfast or camping in the wild are not encouraged. The former are reserved for accommodating people involved in projects. Camping in the wild can raise problems of safety. Some places are not appropriate for camping when tides are strong or during the mullet fishing season. Cape Timiris is a particularly sensitive area for the reproduction of the mullet. Camping and access by vehicles during the night are banned in that area from October to January.

Bathing

Imraguen women are not authorized to bathe, nor to disrobe in public. If you want to have a swim, then please do so away from the villages.

Collecting objects

When visiting beaches you may find tortoise shells or, at neolithic sites, fragments of flint and pottery. Please leave them where they are for the pleasure of the visitors who will come after you and to avoid encouraging trade in rare objects and species threatened with extinction.

Welcoming tourists

May we remind you that our resources are limited and they are derived essentially from the sea, but we do not have the means of storing fresh produce. Therefore, please be indulgent. Our meals are prepared according to daily catches and available resources. The more favourable period of the year is between October and January when, thanks to intensive fishing, we can provide fresh fish and lobster, etc.

Water is a scarce resource which costs a lot to transport. We have little water to provide you with. Please bring your own water supply to last the duration of your stay at the PNBA.

Fishing tackle

You are kindly asked to handle our fishing tackle with care. Do not take any objects stored on the boats. Any boats which have run aground on the beach have not been abandoned but are in the process of being repaired or being sheltered from storms.

Gifts and contributions

If you wish to help us improve our living conditions, below is a list of objects which we need and projects which you could help us fund:

- equipment for producing fishing nets: pulleys, ropes, floats and hooks;
- fishermen's clothing and oilskins;
- equipment for repairing or producing local craft products;
- coloured cotton material for khaimas and patchwork;
- balls of wool for tableware and cushions;
- coloured cotton thread for hats;
- needles;
- plastic strips for braiding and pearls for necklaces;
- paint for painting shells;
- leather strips for key rings;
- clothes, T-shirts and sails;
- containers, bottles and jerry cans for storing water and fish oil.

Projects

- desalination plant
- dredging of wells
- building of houses and latrines.

ANNEX 6

BREAKDOWN OF COSTS FOR ORGANIZING AN EXCURSION ON CAMELBACK ON THE BASIS OF EIGHT PEOPLE

ESSENDILENE Circuit – Ajers – Djanet – Algeria

Details with guide on departure from France	Unit cost	Quantity	CA	%	% by sector
CA achieved on basis of eight people	1,185	8	9,480	100%	
Service France			3,876	41%	100.0%
Tour operator mark-up: assimilated to consultancy	272.5	8	2,180	23%	56.2%
Guide leaving France, therefore TO staff member	126	8	1,008	11%	26.0%
Expenses French guide (air ticket + miscellaneous)	400	1	400	4%	10.3%
Logistics leaving France supplied directly by TO	36	8	288	3%	7.4%
Air transport: Charter or scheduled flight				2,944	31%
Airline	368	8	2,944	31%	
Local expenses			2,650	28%	100%
Mark-up local host	127	8	1,016	11%	38%
Food	200	1	200	2%	8%
Land transport: transfer by minibus or 4 x 4	182	1	182	2%	7%
Hotel-type accommodation	10	8	80	1%	3%
Logistics	10	8	80	1%	3%
Camel rental (12 camels x 8 days)	7	96	672	7%	25%
Cook	15	8	120	1%	5%
Chief camel-driver	18	8	144	2%	5%
Camel-driver (2 camel-drivers x 8 days)	9	16	144	2%	5%
Local guide (If no guide leaving from France)			0	0%	0%
Ajers National Park tax	1.5	8	12	0%	0%

Details with guide on departure from France	Unit cost	Quantity	CA	%	% by sector
CA achieved on basis of eight people	1,185	8	9,480	93%	
Service France			2,468	26%	100.0%
Tour operator mark-up: assimilated to consultancy	272.5	8	2,180	23%	88.3%
Guide leaving France, therefore TO staff member	0	8	0	0%	0.0%
Expenses French guide (air ticket + miscellaneous)	0	1	0	0%	0.0%
Logistics leaving France supplied directly by TO	36	8	288	3%	11.7%
Air transport: Charter or scheduled flight				2,944	31%
Airline	368	8	2,944	31%	
Local expenses			3,370	36%	100%
Mark-up local host	127	8	1,016	11%	30%
Food	200	1	200	2%	6%
Land transport: transfer by minibus or 4 x 4	182	1	182	2%	5%
Hotel-type accommodation	10	8	80	1%	2%
Logistics	10	8	80	1%	2%
Camel rental (12 camels x 8 days)	7	96	672	7%	20%
Cook	15	8	120	1%	4%
Chief camel-driver	18	8	144	2%	4%
Camel-driver (2 camel-drivers x 8 days)	9	16	144	2%	4%
Local guide (If no guide leaving from France)	90	8	720	8%	21%
Ajjers National Park tax	1.5	8	12	0%	0%

ANNEX 7

EXAMPLE OF THE CROQ'NATURE AND AMITIÉ FRANCO-TOUAREG ASSOCIATIONS

The story began thanks to the founder and director of the Croq'Nature association when he left for Morocco in 1993 to look for partners to organize camel trekking with French tourists. He by chance met the family of a camel-driver who was leading dromedaries along the road to Zagora, a town in north-eastern Morocco. They struck a bargain: the Azizi family would become Croq'Nature's partner.

Before meeting this organization, the Azizi family organized day trips with four dromedaries in order to earn a little extra money as times were often difficult with breeding just a few goats, and tending a garden and palm grove. Some 10 years later, there are 18 to 40 of them working regularly on organizing camel trekking. In all, they provide a livelihood for more than 180 people. The family now owns some 40 dromedaries, their house has been entirely restored and a gîte for 35 people was opened in 1998. Furthermore, the place for camping with nomadic tents in a large palm grove has been developed in partnership with Croq'Nature.

Thanks to the profits generated by the trekking, the Azizi family has set up an NGO with the aim of safeguarding the nomadic tradition by funding the construction of wells. The Azizi family, which is Arab, belongs to a major Saharan tribe, some of whom still lead a nomadic life in the desert, rearing goats and camels, while others are in the process of sedentarization.

Work in the desert

Two cooperative agencies have also been set up in Mali and Niger. As in Morocco, jobs are therefore provided for local people who cater for tourists and organize excursions. For each trip organized by Croq'Nature, 6% of the cost is levied to fund sustainable development projects for the benefit of the Saharan nomads in Mali, Niger and Morocco.

Every year, 700 to 800 tourists travel with Croq'Nature, largely from France, Switzerland and Belgium, providing an annual turnover of more than 1.5 million francs. To this must be added the profits derived from the sale of Berber and Tuareg craft products together with subscriptions and donations from members. The development projects implemented are decided on and followed up by the Amitié Franco-Touareg (AFT) association and by local NGOs.

Within the Croq'Nature and AFT associations, cooperation goes hand in hand with development. The AFT president explains how he got to know of Croq'Nature: "I made my first trip to southern Morocco in 1996 with my wife and five children. What helped us make up our minds was the development aspect. At the time, AFT had just set up its first class in Niger; it was a very young outfit in those days. I became the president of the association at the general meeting the following year. From that time on, I really got involved. I went on a second trip in 1997 to visit the new classes built in Niger. Now I go there once or twice a year".

Schooling, water and health

The projects supported in the Sahara focus particularly on education, water (the boring of wells) and health care. Education is a necessity for the Tuareg. As a nomadic people by essence, they have always been kept away from government facilities. "For many years, the Tuareg refused the schooling imposed on them and preferred to send their former slaves to school instead of their own children. It was therefore the Blacks who found themselves in power after decolonization." Furthermore, the Tuareg have lived through major dramas in recent decades. Their dromedaries died by the thousands during the great droughts. In Mali, they migrated southwards towards the agricultural areas but the sedentary Blacks did not accept them as, in the past, the Tuareg were feudal lords and the Blacks were their slaves. To flee poverty as well as the Malian Government's repression and its non-assistance, the Tuareg went into exile. The young nurtured rebellious ideas and a veritable civil war broke out between 1990 and 1996 involving the Tuareg, the Malian Army and the Songhai Black militia, resulting in thousands of deaths. Peace returned in 1996 thanks to negotiations between the representatives of civil society, assisted by the United Nations.

"Today, the Tuareg fully realize that they must make up for lost time, they must educate their children, that some must become schoolteachers as there is a dire shortage in Niger and Mali." Schooling has therefore become important in their eyes in order to learn to defend their rights, to manage better in life and to understand a government document... "In the past", a Tuareg head teacher deplores, "the Tuareg were rich. They didn't need education. They had their herds. Today, we have only two Tuareg ministers, while the other ethnic groups have ten!"

However, some continue to fear that their children will go on to higher education and ultimately turn their backs on their culture. If they go on beyond primary school, they will end up in boarding institutions in town and will therefore be completely cut off from their family environment. It is therefore important to obtain Tuareg primary school teachers.

“For a school to be recognized by the central government which will then pay the salaries, there have to be qualified teachers. As there are very few qualified Tuareg, Songhais are often recruited. However, they do not know either the language or the culture of the Tuareg, are unable to communicate with the parents and are faced with many difficulties to integrate. There are two visions in constant conflict in this regard. Some believe that it would be better for schools to be private so they could recruit an unqualified Tuareg who is nevertheless competent enough to teach. In the medium term, it would obviously be more efficient. The other view is that it is necessary that a school be recognized so that it doesn't have to be permanent subsidized. In that way, money can be invested elsewhere. After several years, we have now reached this second conclusion.”

Collective decisions

Local NGOs have therefore been set up to ensure that investments respond to collective priorities. “At the start”, the AFT explains, “we based our task on the needs listed by a reputable person. In the wake of various problems, the money was not allocated to where it had been planned. We decided therefore to adopt another approach. We asked the local population to create a representative association. We would hold meetings with the association and explain what we were doing. For a school, for example, we would pay for the tables and chairs, the canteen and the teachers' salaries. We then attempted to obtain government approval. In turn, the government then accepted responsibility for salaries and part of the cost of the canteen and school equipment. After four or five years, we try to ensure that the Tuareg are financially autonomous, that they can rely on their own resources. Some breed herds which they then sell to pay for school equipment”.

On the basis of this process, the Tchit Tintaghat was opened in 1995. Located in Niger, in the arid Air region where semi-nomadic Tuareg live, breeding goats and dromedaries, it has now become a recognized public school. Three primary school teachers teach 100 or more pupils in two classes in a permanent building and one in a temporary one. A local NGO is administered by the village chief. Thanks to his determination and to support from Croq'Nature and AFT, his village now has a well and a health care dispensary, catering for a population of some 3,500 people.

Another school has been funded in Niger, at Taferer. It caters for 80 pupils in a sedentary area. The school principal is a Tuareg which is a considerable advantage for contact with the local population.

In Mali, trekking expeditions are organized in collaboration with the Tuareg on the site of Echag. The population of 515 people is nomadic within a specific perimeter. They rear goats, sheep and dromedaries. The Echaghill association was set up to ensure that as many nomads as possible could reap the benefits of tourism. Two classes for nomadic children were opened as well as a health care centre and a local craft cooperative.

Croq'Nature and AFT, two dynamic small-scale operations, have won a wager, namely of responding to the needs of the desert population through intelligent tourism. “It is not a humanist organization. It is quite simply the equitable sharing of profits. The jobs generate wages and profits and these are invested for the benefit of the community”, as the Croq'Nature director points out.

Source: Traverses March 2001, traverses@skynet.be