VIETNAM: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Hanoi - On August 17th, 2016, the conference “Vietnam: Towards Sustainable Tourism in the Era of Climate Change” took place with the aim to strengthen stakeholder engagement with tourism and climate change issues. The conference was organised by the Environmentally and Socially Responsible Tourism Capacity Development Programme (known as ESRT Programme) as technical support to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT).

The conference today brought together the tourism sector including, policy makers leaders, business sector and climate change experts in a way that will encourage an intensive learning dialogue. It will help provide the sustainability platform from which Vietnam can achieve its ambitions to double tourism numbers over the next few years.

In the opening speech, Vice Minister of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism Ms. Dinh Thi Bich Lien expressed her gratitude towards the initiative of organizing the conference. “The Ministry would like to have the continuous and close support and guidance from the EU Delegation to Vietnam, the relevant line ministries, provinces, tourism enterprises, training institutions and other developing partners in the process of sustainable development of the tourism industry in Vietnam”.

Ambassador Bruno Angelet, European Union Delegation to Vietnam stressed that climate change is a critical issue facing Vietnam and the tourism industry has an important role to play, as has the European Union. The EU-funded ESRT Programme through technical assistance has supported to build this important awareness of climate change as it impacts on the tourism sector. It has done so by helping to create awareness not only of environmental issues, but of the need for responsibility for destination management to be shared between Government and industry, and that both are responsible for managing tourism’s negative as well as its positive impacts.

According to the scientists and expert analysis, Vietnam climate change has direct impacts on the agricultural sector, fisheries, culture, tourism, trade and services, while at the same time it has indirect negative effects on other sectors such as transport, transportation, construction industry, public health, etc. Rising sea levels may result in the disappearance of some beaches, while others are suffering from inland erosion; affect to the natural resources in the coastal lowlands, damaging the cultural heritage, protected areas, eco-tourism areas and the tourism infrastructure...etc.

With the aim of enhancing the capacity of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) and the provincial Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism/Department of Tourism in the development of policies and plans of action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the tourism industry, the EU-ESRT Programme has mobilized an international and local climate change expert from April 2016 to develop guidelines for “Sustainable development of Vietnam Tourism sector in the context of climate change”.

Professor Peter Burns - international expert in tourism and climate change, pointed out that there is a need for greater communication and knowledge exchange between government departments. “At the end of the conference, the climate change experts will know more about tourism’s special circumstances, the tourism people will know more about their obligations towards the environment, and policy makers will more easily be able to place tourism in their plans for national green growth”, Peter Burns said.
The time is right for all tourism stakeholders to forge ahead. Any further delay in action will result in consequences for the Vietnam tourism sector and the people who depend upon it for their livelihoods. It is time to “seal a deal” whereby the Government of Vietnam invests in greenhouse gas mitigation and climate change adaptation approaches and the private sector forges ahead with innovative low carbon initiatives that will not only create employment but will also contribute to the economy.

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ABOUT THE ESRT PROGRAMME

The ESRT Programme is the largest tourism technical support programme to Vietnam with its aim to mainstream responsible tourism principles into Vietnam’s tourism sector, to enhance competitiveness and contributing to achieving the Socio Economic Development Plan. It is funded by the European Union with 11 million Euros and the Vietnamese Government contributes 1.1 million Euro, implementing from 2011 to 2015. Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism is the Executing Authority, while Vietnam National Administration of Tourism is the Implementing Agency.

Key strategic pillars of the ESRT Programme: Policy Support and Institutional strengthening; Establishing useful Organisational Structures and Networks between the public and private; developing a Skilled Tourism Labour Force; Improvement of Tourism Competitiveness; Awareness Raising for Responsible Tourism.

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