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TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION:  
TOWARDS A BETTER UTILIZATION OF THE TOURISM RESOURCES IN  
THE MEDITERRANEAN

Note prepared by the World Tourism Organization (WTO)

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ANNEX VI

TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION :  
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TOWARDS A BETTER UTILIZATION OF THE TOURISM  
RESOURCES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

I. THE PROBLEM STATED

1. In 1969 there were 155 million international tourist arrivals in the world of which 115 million, or 74 per cent, were in Europe. By 1975, world tourism had grown to 213 million arrivals of which 151 million, or 71 per cent, were registered in Europe. According to IUOTO/WTO's Pilot Study of Long Term Forecasts, made in 1970-71, world tourism could easily reach a level of 250 million international arrivals by 1980, and may well reach as much as 280 million by that year, representing an annual rate of growth of between 4.5% and 5.5% since the start of the decade.
2. Although Europe's share of total arrivals has been diminishing slowly, the great majority of tourist movements - between 180 and 200 million - will be concentrated in the Continent in 1980, and Europe will remain a prime tourist destination for the foreseeable future. A sizeable share of tourist traffic has been and continues to be directed to the coasts of countries bordering the Mediterranean. Taking international and domestic tourism together, it may reasonably be estimated that in 1973 something like 450 million tourist nights were spent in Mediterranean coastal resorts - not only in European countries, but also in countries of Africa and the Middle East region that border this sea. Among non-European countries, it is in those on the North African coast of the Mediterranean that tourism development has perhaps been most marked in the recent past. Direct receipts from foreign tourists already account for a substantial proportion of GNP in a number of Mediterranean countries. Some 1973 figures will make this clear: Malta 13.9 %, Cyprus 9.3 %, Tunisia 7.0 %, Morocco 7.0 %, Spain 5.5 %, Greece 3.3 %, Israel 2.9 %. These figures, it must be recalled, do not take account of the significant contribution made by domestic tourism to the economies of many Mediterranean countries, and particularly to the economies of their coastal regions.
3. By any standards, tourism is a sizeable complex of activities in countries of the Mediterranean. Such activities evidently make a significant call upon the resources - natural and otherwise - of the Mediterranean. It is evident that as tourist flows become greater in the future, greater attention will need to be directed to planning for the better and more efficient use of the region's resources.

## II. STATE OF PRESENT KNOWLEDGE

4. Of the estimated 450 million tourist nights spent in Mediterranean resorts (a 1975 estimate would be about the same as the 1973 figure), a high proportion will have been spent in the peak holiday months of July and August, efforts aimed at staggering holidays in European countries having met with mixed fortunes in the postwar era. Analysis of the tourist density - or the ratio of tourists to permanent population - carried out by the French Secretariat of State for Tourism help to put this knowledge in perspective. For all French summer resorts, they suggest that tourists already outnumber residents in the high season by 16 to 10. This, it must be emphasized, is a mean figure; in specific cases tourists may outnumber the local population by 40 to 10 or even higher ratios. While the economic benefits of a large and prosperous tourist sector - a sector essentially without chimneys - have been underlined above, it is clear nevertheless that the movement of a large number of persons at a particular season of the year towards the Mediterranean coastal regions makes considerable demands on the resources of the region. The nature and type of these resources is a matter for town planners and developers who have to consider the requirements in terms of accommodation, roads, water, electricity, drainage, etc. It is clear that tourism could not have developed in the past had it not been for a close matching of supply (equipment and infrastructure) with demand. However, the very success of international tourism which marked the 1950s and 1960s may have meant that in some cases planning measures were sidestepped and in other cases regulations designed to protect the resources of the Mediterranean for the benefit of residents and tourists alike were not applied. It is from the early 1970s on that concern began to be felt about a possible "saturation" of the receptive capacity of the most frequented areas of the Mediterranean.
5. The "pause for reflection" provided by the oil crisis and the ensuing world recession may have been salutary in providing an opportunity to analyse fears about possible "saturation" more closely. Broadly speaking, it emerges from an analysis of the present situation that fears of "saturation" of supply are largely premature - with the exception of certain highly developed areas - though the need can be clearly seen for the creation, towards the 1990s, of entirely new tourist zones in the Mediterranean region to accommodate the tourist flows likely to be experienced at that date.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

6. In the long term, various solutions to the problems of concentration of tourism demand in the Mediterranean region might be envisaged. They include :

(a) Measures to divert demand to non-coastal areas

Following inventory of tourist resources in non-coastal zones, and taking due account of infrastructure, communications and the desirability of arresting migration from rural areas, it might be found worthwhile to engage in selective promotion, encouraging travel to non-coastal areas, particularly the countryside. Such campaigns might be particularly effective in relation to domestic tourism, but, given suitable bilateral or regional cooperation, they might also be successful at the international level.

(b) Staggering of holidays

Countries of the Mediterranean zone have already taken substantial action to stagger holidays via pricing policies. Nevertheless, the effect on total demand has been less than hoped for. In future, attention will need to be paid to those segments of the market (e.g. families) which can most readily be encouraged to stagger holidays, given appropriate social measures by generating countries. Measures of coordination between generating and receiving countries in the Mediterranean region certainly appear necessary. At the national level, a number of government Departments are likely to be involved in plans to secure greater staggering of holidays, and at the national level too, coordination will be necessary if the desired results are to be achieved.

(c) Reclamation of areas at present unsuitable for tourism

Possibilities in this area are perhaps not unlimited. Nevertheless the Languedoc-Roussillon development in Southern France may serve as a case-study of what may be achieved and of what pitfalls must be avoided.

(d) Development of new zones where development has not yet taken place

The availability of virgin zones in the Mediterranean is obviously fairly limited. Nevertheless, the rapidity of modern air travel makes it possible to link hitherto inaccessible zones to the population centres of Europe. Due account must of course be taken of the prospective economic benefits of developing such virgin zones for alternative purposes. Equally, environmental considerations may militate against any form of development in zones where ecosystems are in particularly fragile equilibrium.

7. These measures are essentially long-term, however. In the immediate future and for the short term it would be desirable to assess to what extent those laws and regulations applicable to zoning, construction, anti-pollution, protection of nature, etc., are being properly applied and enforced. To the extent that they are not, it would be desirable to draw this to the attention of the appropriate authorities, since tourism is, in the last

analysis, dependent upon the preservation of the natural resources of the Mediterranean. To the extent that new or tougher legislative and other measures may be needed, these should be proposed.

8. It is suggested that action might begin by surveying a relatively reduced geographical area to assess the degree to which existing measures are being respected and enforced. The area selected should preferably include a high degree of tourist concentration. The conclusions of this pilot survey should point to the need for more general action in other areas.