HIGHLIGHTS: 7 DECEMBER 2016

The theme for the Rio Conventions Pavilion (RCP) on Wednesday, 7 December, was Tourism and Fisheries Management. Presentations and discussions focused on showcasing solutions from islands and from other States, as tourism destinations and “biodiversity hotspots.” In the afternoon participants focused on integrating sustainable fisheries management into wider sustainable development frameworks including tourism.

The event was organized by the Global Islands Partnership (GLISPA), the CBD Secretariat and the government of Mexico.

OPENING

Oliver Hillel, CBD, suggested thinking of “mainstreaming biodiversity into the productive sectors” in terms of “nature stays if it pays.” He drew attention to the 10-year anniversaries of CBD’s work programme on island biodiversity and the creation of the GLISPA cooperative platform.

Kedrick Pickering, Deputy Premier, British Virgin Islands, and Co-Leader, GLISPA, said GLISPA has helped islands understand the importance of biodiversity for their economies. He said the environment is the number one asset that draws in tourism, and leaders must protect it and involve tourists in this.

Alberto Pacheco Capella, UNEP, noted that non-island nations also recognize the importance of biodiversity for tourism, mentioning a study valuing tourism in Ecuador’s Protected Areas (PAs) at US$500 million annually.

TOURISM

Kate Brown, Executive Director, GLISPA, introduced the session. Oliver Hillel presented on tourism, biodiversity and ecosystems, stressing the importance of the multiplying factor of investments and the need to reinvest tourism revenue in PAs.

On how to manage and reduce the environmental and social footprint, he stressed the importance of planning and involving local communities, noting that many indigenous communities engaged in tourism have managed to preserve their culture and have become tourism entrepreneurs.

TOURISM AND BIODIVERSITY BRIGHT SPOTS:

Eric Coppenger, African Wildlife Foundation, discussed the origin of the “Bright Spots” expression, noting it entails finding out who is successful in terms of nature conservation to help others to emulate this.

Teresa Solis, Ministry of Tourism, Mexico, highlighted her country’s progress towards sustainable tourism. She noted challenges around managing areas where tourism has boomed and addressing coastal erosion and impacts of climate change.

Solis discussed the development of sustainable tourism zones and the need to align all relevant stakeholders towards a common goal.

Kedrick Pickering observed that in the British Virgin Islands, tourism is the leading revenue earner, based around yachting and attracting the higher end of the market. He highlighted the Sustainable Yachting Initiative aimed at reducing marine...
pollution by prohibiting the use of lead-based paints and stipulating the use of holding tanks. He added that a system of mooring has been developed to protect coral reefs and the seabed.

Trevor Sandwith, IUCN, highlighted his organization’s new Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, an initiative that encourages and celebrates the success of PAs that reach excellent standards of management. He said the list is organized around four components: good governance; sound design and planning; effective management; and successful conservation outcomes.

In response to a question on transborder cooperation on tourism and biodiversity, Solis noted the need for greater cooperation between Mexico with its Central American neighbors, while Sandwith cited examples from African countries with strong tourism-based economies working with neighbors through joint planning, marketing and other cooperation.

On engaging PA visitors, Sandwith said many communities have worked out how to do this and success stories should be used to develop guidance on the issue.

TOURISM AND FINANCING: Mae Adams, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), chaired the session. Geoffrey Bolan, CEO, Sustainable Travel International, said that large travel companies could do much more in terms of jobs and sustainable tourism funding. He noted that “getting hands on the money is hard,” particularly for social and environmental goods since the private sector needs investment returns.

Robbie Bovino, TNC, on behalf of Shanna Emmanuel, Government of Saint Lucia, described the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI), a partnership between Caribbean governments, the business community and NGOs, aimed at protecting and sustainably managing 20% of the Caribbean’s marine and coastal ecosystems by 2020. It is financed through a set of trust funds, including the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) and the National Conservation Trust Funds (NCTFs).

Yabanex Batista, CEO, CBF, discussed the Windward Island Marine Trail, a platform for engaging with the Caribbean yachting community. The platform aims to facilitate financial contributions for sustainable development through trust funds such as the CBF. It could also provide information on services, licenses and fees; and enable the collection of fees, for levies including PAs access and fishing licenses.
Observing that birds are charismatic and undervalued, Matt Jeffrey, National Audubon Society, highlighted Birds Means Business, an initiative aimed at fostering ecotourism benefits for local communities while preserving important habitats for birds. He observed that mainstream tourism cannot conserve biodiversity but bird watchers will spend money to see birds in rural environments, which provides local communities incentives for engaging in PAs.

The ensuing discussion centered on incentivizing consumers to pay for biodiversity conservation, and monitoring and evaluating the impact of financing on biodiversity conservation.

TOURISM AND FISHERIES

Alain de Comarmond, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the Seychelles, outlined how environmental conservation has strengthened the Seychelles’ most important economic sectors, tourism and fisheries. He explained how resorts are involved in coral restoration, wetlands preservation, ecolabeling programmes and have adopted low-impact practices. De Comarmond discussed how the fishing industry has adopted responsible practices and noted the Seychelles’ commitment to Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and the “Blue Bond” initiative to finance sustainable fishing.

TOURISM AND FISHERIES – NATIONAL APPROACHES: In his opening remarks, panel Chair Spencer Thomas, Ambassador, Multilateral Environment Agreements, noted the emphasis on “sustainable” in the discussions, observing that for most countries, especially SIDS, there can be no sustainable fishing without tourism, and there can be no sustainable tourism without fisheries.

Federico Méndez Sánchez, Island Ecology and Conservation Group, Mexico, noted advances in his country such as a 2012 island strategy developed with community participation, and the recent gazettement designating all islands as PAs. He stressed the role of fisher cooperatives in promoting island conservation and sustainable fishing in Mexico.

Leonel Requena, UNDP, outlined community approaches in the GEF Small Grants Programme related to fisheries in Belize. He discussed rights-based access for customary fishers and

community-managed access committees; the landscape/seascape approach; and community stewardship in a World Heritage Site. He stressed the importance of community participation, including in the decision-making process.

Handoko Adi Susanto, Rare, highlighted the Fish Forever global initiative, noting that in Indonesia MPA guidelines and policies are applied, but that preferred access should go to traditional communities to protect their benefits. He underscored the National Scale Strategy that is implemented by connecting local activities to national and international commitments.

Noting positive outcomes from the initiative, he pointed to an increase in fishery production, in the number of tourists, and in employment in the tourism sector.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed ways to jointly manage fisheries and tourism and integrate fishers in tourism. De Comarmond said that fisheries and tourism were traditionally treated separately but have now been brought together, given the need to optimize the ocean-based, blue economy. Stressing support to fishers’ empowerment and to investments in alternative livelihoods, Requena noted that fishers are transitioning to the tourism industry and that capacity building is needed to facilitate this. Méndez Sánchez cautioned that fishers should not be forced to transition from fishing to tourism, but rather have the option of doing so if desired.

Participants then considered the ecosystem-based approach, de Comarmond noting the challenge of the social economic valuation exercise. Addressing enforcement and compliance issues, Requena stressed the need to address innovative tools in terms of fishery regulations and enforcement. Susanto mentioned the use of SMS texts to transmit information on illegal acts to enforcement officers.

In conclusion, panelists stressed that co-management is key but may become a burden for the community, noting that the government still has to facilitate compliance and surveillance. The importance of community empowerment to influence policy and ownership was emphasized. Participants agreed that up-scaling co-management requires education and capacity building.
TOURISM AND FISHERIES – REGIONAL AND GLOBAL APPROACHES: Jamison Ervin, UNDP, moderated the session. In her introductory remarks she observed that fish is the main source of protein for millions of people, noting that 80% of fisheries have been fully or over-exploited and that ecotourism is growing by double digits.

Alberto Pacheco Capella, UNEP, highlighted issues affecting communities such as unsustainable, unregulated or illegal fishing practices, noting that many countries do not have the capacity to manage fish stocks. He observed that land-based pollution and nutrient enrichment is impacting fisheries, marine and coastal areas. On marine litter, he said microplastics are already entering the fisheries supply chain and that scientific studies of the effects on human health are not yet available. He further added that the acidification of waters due to climate change is having an impact on fisheries.

On solutions, he highlighted UNEP’s Global Partnership on Marine Litter and noted work on nutrients and wastewater management as well as collaboration with governments to create national marine action plans.

Therese Yarde, CARICOM, discussed sustainable tourism and fisheries in the Caribbean Community. She cited a recent study by the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, which found that stakeholders in the fisheries and tourism sectors appear to be pursuing incompatible goals and that the growth of tourism in the Caribbean has marginalized fishers and compromised their traditional use of coastal and marine resources. She noted that although there are some opportunities for fishers to benefit from tourism, most are not able to capitalize on this due to lack of capacity and marginalization. Yarde said that action needs to focus on: developing participatory mechanisms to balance the needs of the two sectors; fostering respect for fishers; strengthening the capacity of fishers to take advantage of tourism opportunities; transferring technology; and enhancing access to capital.

Afrina Choudhury, WorldFish, addressed gender perspectives on fisheries. She noted that often the role of women in fisheries goes unrecognized, a situation that the EU has addressed by creating the “collaborative spouse status.” She detailed other constraints in enhancing the role of women in fisheries, including stereotypes and social norms, unequal access to jobs and facilities, lower wages, and dependence on traditional forms of livelihoods that make them more vulnerable to ecological change. She said addressing the problem can either be done by working within existing norms, or by seeking a “gender transformative approach” that challenges existing social structures; she advocated the latter.

In response to questions from the floor, Choudhury agreed that sometimes donors have to balance gender equity promotion with respect for local cultures. She added that it is possible to work around this by differentiating between positive and negative norms and by seeking to change the latter through education so that local communities understand the benefits of involving women. She noted that sometimes the task can be more difficult because the social norms and constraints involved are not obvious. A participant cautioned that an approach that works in one country or region might not function in another, so “toolboxes” need to be stocked with multiple approaches.