

## **II INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM 12 TO 15 MAY 2008**

### **DECLARATION OF FORTALEZA**

We, citizens, communities, small tourism operators, researchers, governmental and non-governmental organizations and social movements, coming from 19 Brazilian States and other 13 countries of the Americas and Europe (Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, United States, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany and Italy), participants of the II International Seminar on Sustainable Tourism, which took place in the city of Fortaleza, Northeastern Brazil, from 12 to 15 May 2008, declare our support, motivation, action and defense for the construction of community-based solidarity tourism as a political project which respects the autonomy of local cultures, environmental conservation and socio-economy with solidarity.

During these four days of work, which included thematic panels, workshops, conversations, exchange of experiences and commemorations, we verified that another tourism model is not only possible and necessary, but already exists. There are multiple experiences that reflect thoughts, practices and new possibilities of tourism, having as premises the strengthening of community organizations through the permanent experience of participative and self-managed processes.

We highlight that the lifestyles that link the traditional populations to the local ecosystems, narrowly related to the historical processes of resistance to the logics of colonization and degradation of the environment, are the background from where creative processes of implementation of community-based solidarity tourism emerge as the expression of a life project that affirms several cultures, empowers social actors and defends territories. Within this context, we list as marks of those initiatives:

- The search for instruments for environmental protection, such as the establishment of Conservation Units and of environmentally protected areas, including marine and estuarine ones;
- The guarantee of legitimate access to land, water and territory as mechanism of reproduction of cultures and local lifestyles;
- The implementation of small tourist infrastructures, which respect the natural environment and is built by communities;
- The strengthening of popular cultural expressions that value the exchange and the dialogue among cultures;
- The integration of tourism into other productive processes, especially fishing, small agriculture, gastronomy and handicraft;
- The creation of autonomous mechanisms of territorial management that regulate the relationship between tourists and reception communities;

- The establishment of alternative means of promotion and marketing of tourism attractions and products;
- The establishment of strategic partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations, international cooperation agencies, research institutions, social movements, networks, forums and other movements for the defense of rights.

As counterpoint to the conventional mass tourism, therefore, community-based solidarity tourism community-based rural tourism, community ecotourism which, more than modalities, are expressions of the affirmation of tourism practices based on sustainability and autonomy, against wealth and income concentration of conventional tourism development.

We understand that, in face of the conflicts and disputes that involve tourism, there are strategic and theoretical-methodological challenges to be faced with conviction, motivation and commitment by the social actors who believe in and encourage the multiple processes for the consolidation of community-based solidarity tourism:

- The construction of alliances between organizations and social movements to produce information, make visible, denounce and face the impacts of mass tourism and real estate business on national and international levels;
- The construction of alternative tourist activities free from the marks of economic exploration of nature and of cultures, making possible solidarity practices of local experiences that strengthen community-based solidarity tourism;
- The deepening of debates on the dimensions of gender, race/ethnics, generation and class in community-based solidarity tourism, so as to revert the values and practices of oppression and dominance (re)produced by mass tourism and real estate speculation;
- The collective construction of autonomy and self-determination of communities as subjects of their histories;
- The linking of community-based solidarity tourism to the social struggles in defense of territories of local populations as a way of resistance to the re-colonization provoked by the process of neoliberal capitalist development;
- The incidence on public policies for the construction and promotion of collective and individual human rights of peoples, and not simply for the creation of precarious jobs and compensatory actions;
- To deepen the understanding of the dynamics and characterization of community and solidarity tourism experiences, so as to qualify and strengthen the potential of our interventions; To systematize and elaborate knowledge to consolidate a theoretical base on community-based solidarity tourism, placing it in the context of the critic of the conventional tourism model;

- To build processes that consolidate fair relationships in tourism, in which the exchange leads to a social alliance and between tourists and community members, in the perspective of overcoming social inequalities;
- To develop strategies to place community-based solidarity tourism in the market, guaranteeing ethical and consumption in solidarity. ,
- To develop solidarity strategies of fundraising To execute, daily, transparency and democracy with respect to the administration of available resources;
- To establish processes that consolidate the democratization of information, as well as communication systems that favor the marketing of solidarity tourism experiences;
- To face the debate on the dimensions of race/ethnics and gender, with special attention on sexual exploration, people trafficking and the commercialization of the body and the sexuality of women, children and teenagers;
- To build, support and develop networks of solidarity cooperation for the strengthening of community-based solidarity tourism on national and international levels.

Concerning the governments, we finally emphasize - although recognizing the importance of some actions already implemented by the governments of some countries - the need to redirect their policies to define a tourism development project that considers the needs and the rights of peoples, reflected in the experiences and the ideas that have been constituted by the proposal of community-based solidarity tourism. Thus, we highlight as urgent needs:

- To implement specific policies that guarantee the rights of populations to their territories, such as indigenous, quilombolas, riverside, fisherfolk, urban populations etc;
- To guarantee the amplification of the qualified participation of those populations in the instances of definition and deliberation of public policies for tourism;
- To implement necessary basic infrastructure policies for the consolidation of the self-managed experiences of community-based solidarity tourism;
- To implement policies of support and promotion of community-based solidarity tourism not as compensatory policies, but as structural for community development;
- To implement policies of professional tourism formation, prioritizing an integrated vision of the socio-environmental dimensions;
- To implement legislation changes, so as to guarantee the feasibility of community-based solidarity tourism based on an appropriate legal framework according to the needs of the social actors (solidarity groups, small operators, among others) who develop that experience in several countries;
- To establish a legislation to favor the preservation of ecosystems and territories; reverting the global tendency of watering down the environmental legislations in favor of big tourist and real estate

enterprises that have been harming local populations and provoked serious damages to the socio-environmental sustainability of the Planet.

- To establish community based tourism enterprises as full members of national and global tourism trade organizations (UNWTO), to be able to influence tourism policies, to prevent the use of the term community tourism for social marketing by mainstream tourism companies and for misleading certification programs.

Recognizing the range of issues that involve the affirmation of community-based solidarity tourism, we conclude our meeting inviting the whole society to participate in this great collective trip in utopia and in action, making feasible this new solidarity tourism, committed with human rights, with justice (socio-environmental, of gender, race and ethnics), democracy, sovereignty and autonomy of all peoples.