

This conference was an initiative contributing to the



**Sustainable Tourism
PROGRAMME**
Committed to drive the change

Conference Report

Conference on Sustainable Tourism in SIDS

November 2017, UniSey campus Anse Royale, Mahe, Seychelles

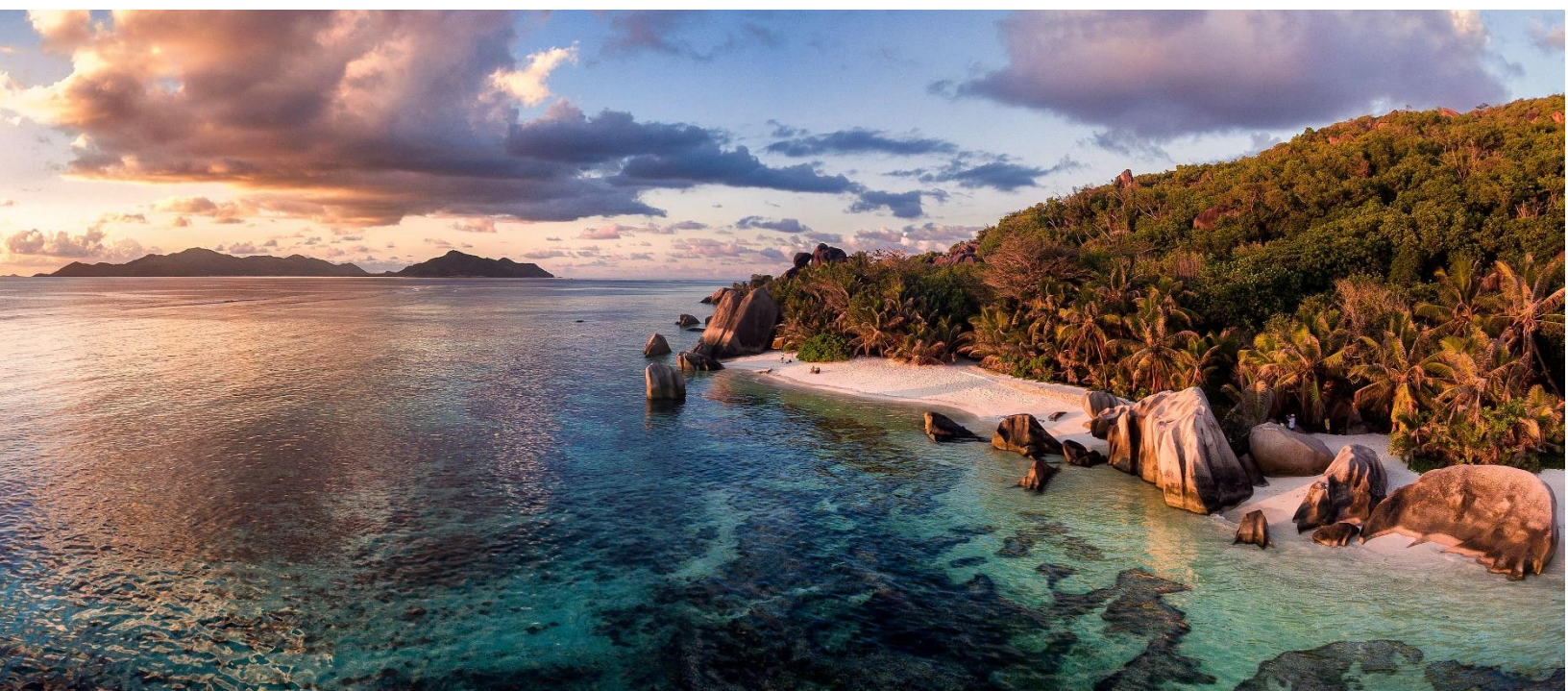


Photo: Laurent Alis



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Conference Summary

The Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Foundation (SSTF) in cooperation with the University of Seychelles (Department of Tourism and Cultural Heritage) and their partners the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group (TAPAS group), the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and the Paris Tourism Sorbonne Institute of Research and Higher Education in Tourism (IREST) hosted the Conference on Sustainable Tourism in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The conference took place on Thursday November 23rd and Friday November 24th, 2017 at UniSeY campus Anse Royale, Mahe and was open to tourism professionals from public and private sector, NGOs involved in tourism, academics and students. Besides tourism stakeholders from Seychelles, the conference convened 30 international delegates from 22 countries, including Antigua, Aruba, Botswana, Comoros, Egypt, France, Germany, Guam, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Micronesia, New Zealand, Reunion, Sao-Tomé and Principe, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, UAE, USA and Vanuatu. The opening ceremony was attended by the Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles Mr. Vincent Meriton and the Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports and Marine Mr. Maurice Loustau-Lalanne, who, in his opening speech, emphasized the goal of every tourism business in Seychelles committing to operate sustainably. The Minister stated that tourism is creating many business and employment opportunities in the Seychelles but is now confronted with the challenges of managing growth to benefit communities in the archipelago on a long-term basis. So far 15 hotels in Seychelles are operating with the Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL), which is a good start, but the goal is for every business in Seychelles to operate sustainably. The SSTL is a sustainable management system, which runs on a voluntary, user friendly basis, designed to inspire more sustainable ways of doing business for hotels of all sizes. The Minister recognized Morris Strong as an international pioneer for Sustainable Tourism who made provision for the Morris Strong Legacy Scholarships. These scholarships in connection with SUNx Strong Universal Network, a programme promoting climate resilient, impact-travel through a global cloud connected network of Learning, Innovation and Resilience Centres, is of special interest for Seychelles and its citizens. In the aim for progressive change, Seychelles is looking to set up a SUN center in Seychelles. The establishment of such a solar powered climate research and innovation center, would be of value for the Vanilla Islands and Seychelles, to provide a focal point with information on greenhouse gases, impact of travel and access to world class experts. Seychelles has the desire to create a world leading example for sustainable tourism. The Minister congratulated the SSTF, its founder Daniella and their partners for convening this conference in framework of the UN International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

On behalf of the SSTF, Diana Koerner, the Vice-Chair, highlighted that the conference was envisioned as being a facilitating event for connecting people in SIDS, wanting to work together in a collective approach. It is the Seychelles' contribution to the International Year of Sustainable Tourism aiming to facilitate networking opportunities and new partnerships. Efforts have been undertaken to make the event as sustainable as possible, including no printouts, focusing on local partnerships and local products, etc.



Having the GSTC as a partner for the event highlights the SSTF's vision to prepare Seychelles for GSTC destination certification in 5 years' time.

In his keynote, Randy Durband, the CEO of the GSTC and key speaker of the event, provided the participants with a global view of sustainable tourism, highlighting the fact there is still an uneven development and awareness of sustainable tourism. He observed that the private sector is moving too slowly, with public resources being spent for promotional purposes, little on development and management. However, measurement is on the rise globally. Moving beyond merely counting the number of arrivals, he urged destinations to look into average length of stay and average spend per visitor. While providing an overview of CO2 emissions in tourism, with accommodations accounting for 21% of overall tourism CO2 emissions, Randy emphasized the need to make the experience on the ground as clean as possible. Thereby focusing on more quality visitors, on increasing the expenditure per visitor, and length of stay. He mentioned slow travel as a trend to make people stay longer in a destination. Randy expressed that he was impressed by what he could see in Seychelles. For the GSTC, now being 10 years old, the key element has always been the host communities and not just the environment. There have been 6000 inputs since the original GSTC criteria were provided, making them standards not just for certification but also for awareness raising, education and training. The GSTC criteria are free and available online in multiple languages with the aim to make people aware of sustainable tourism issues. The WTTC and UNWTO are currently working on measurement of Sustainable Tourism, mostly to do with hotels and rolling up from there. The UNWTO observatory program is scaling up. In terms of marketing for sustainability, Randy explained the terms "Super greens", "middle greens" and "green rejecters", pressing not to sell green for the sake of green. Selling sustainability has failed in the past, it is crucial to think of a different language, by selling the experience first. Green and sustainable is the secondary message. Authenticity, exceptional and unique experiences are what should be promoted. Making reference to Xavier Font, Randy gave the example of "sustainable food" which does not sound as attractive as "locally sourced, fresh, and authentic food". The trend and demand for unique, sustainable experiences is also increasingly recognized by the private sector. 77% of TUI group hotels have sustainability certifications and TUI management have indicated that will have all certified eventually, pushing this more and more among their partners and supplies. Similar certification trends can be observed in the cruise industry where by 2019 all sustainable shore excursions offered by RCL are to be provided by GSTC certified operators.

Dr Anna Spenceley, Chair of the IUCN WCPA TAPAS Group, gave a keynote on sustainable tourism in protected areas. She provided information on the activities of the TAPAS Group, and also provided examples of current debates and work relating to the 5 protected area conference themes. Dr Madina Regnault, Head of Department of Tourism and Cultural Heritage at UniSey, emphasized in her keynote the importance of cultural and social elements of sustainable tourism in SIDS. She highlighted the vulnerability of SIDS and the threat of "touristification" and the creation of touristic "bubbles". Her presentation talked about staged authenticity and the folklorisation of identities and the power of tourism to boycott places in situations of human rights breaches. She emphasized the importance to pass from a top-down to a bottom-up approach.



The two-day conference included seven sessions on (1) the evaluation of financial and economic benefits of tourism in protected areas, (2) destination management and the application of standards and certification tools for protected areas, (3) impacts on biodiversity of protected area tourism, (4) tourism concessions and partnerships, (5) community-benefits and socio-economic linkages from protected area tourism, (6) sensitization and awareness: tools and best practices to involve local populations and tourists in sustainable tourism, as well as (7) employment and training in sustainable tourism: tools to reduce poverty in SIDS.

National and international delegates presented their research findings, project results and ideas and discussed them during plenary debates and round tables. These presentations had been selected by the Conference Scientific Committee comprising TAPAS Group members and representatives of the Paris Sorbonne, based on submissions of abstracts from around the world. The conference organizers were very satisfied with the high quality of presentations, the professionalism and expertise with which participants engaged.

The conference was followed by a gala dinner themed “Sustainable Tourism in Seychelles”, which took place at AVANI Seychelles Barbarons Resort - a hotel that is in the process of obtaining SSTL certification. International delegates had the opportunity to engage with a wider gathering of Seychellois private sector representatives and partners during a Creole evening, including speeches from Ms Daniella Payet, the founder of the SSTF, and Randy Durband.





Agenda and Presentations

Day 1: Thursday 23 November 2017

Activity	Presenter/facilitator
Opening of the conference	
Official opening and welcome	Bernice Elizabeth
Ministerial Opening	Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports and Marine, Mr. Loustau-Lalanne
Aim and objectives of the meeting, overview of participants, agenda and field visits	Diana Koerner
Session 1: Keynote presentations:	(F) Diana Koerner
Keynote: A global view of sustainable tourism	Randy Durband
Keynote: Sustainable tourism in protected areas	Dr. Anna Spenceley
Keynote: Social responsibility and sustainable tourism in SIDS	Dr. Madina Regnault
Session 2: Evaluation of financial and economic benefits of tourism in protected areas	(F) Kelly Hoareau
Tourism-induced contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals: insights from Jozani – Chwaka Bay National Park and Biosphere Reserve, Zanzibar/Tanzania	Florian Carius (Germany)
Manta Rays, Communities and Tourism: Yap's manta sanctuary as a partnership experiment	José Truda Palazzo (Micronesia)
Can sustainable tourism create and manage Marine Parks?	Sergio Chiarandini (Tanzania)
The reality of providing communities with socio-economic benefits in a coastal protected area in South Africa	Prof. Felicité A. Fairer-Wessels (South Africa)
Plenary debate: What are the best ways of measuring financial and economic benefits of tourism in protected areas?	(F) Dr. Anna Spenceley



Session 3: Destination management and the application of standards and certification tools for protected areas	(F) Randy Durband
Tourism certification in Africa	Dr. Anna Spenceley (Seychelles)
Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL)	Janice Bristol (Seychelles)
Using private-public partnerships to develop sustainable agro-tourism: the Sao Tomé and Principe	Michele Maccari (Sao Tomé ad Príncipe)
Oceans without Borders: &Beyond's pioneering Marine conservation initiative	Prof. Kevin Mearns (South Africa)
Plenary debate: Certification and standards - what is the return on investment for tour operators and destinations?	(F) Randy Durband
Session 4: Impacts on biodiversity of protected area tourism	(F) Dr Ashton Berry
Impacts of voluntourism in the Cap Ternay Marine Park	Josie Woodgate (Seychelles)
Sustaining healthy corals in Tumon Bay Marine Preserve: How is Guam's tourism epicenter coping with climate change?	Dr. Laurie J. Raymundo (Guam)
Impacts of human use on coral health in the Tumon Bay Marine Preserve, Guam	Whitney C. Hoot (Guam)
Hotel establishment and Protected Area Management: Opportunities and potential	Hervé Atayi (UK)

Day 2: Friday 24 November 2017

Activity	Presenter/facilitator
Session 5: Tourism concessions and partnerships	(F) Dr. Anna Spenceley
The prospects for environmentally sustainable tourism in New Zealand's National Parks- testing a concessions-focused theory of regulation	Valentina Dinica (New Zealand)
Protect and Prosper: World Heritage and Tourism in the Wadden Sea	Anja Domnick (Germany)
A Public Private Partnership model for Ecotourism Development in Wadi el Gemal National Park in Egypt	Mahmoud Sarhan (Egypt)



Plenary discussion: What are the ingredients for successful concessions?	(F) Dr. Anna Spenceley
Session 6: Community-benefits and socio-economic linkages from protected area tourism	Bruce Downie
Antigua and Barbuda’s contribution to Sustainable Tourism initiatives that link culture and Heritage meeting CBD targets	Ruth Spencer (Antigua)
Benefits and Costs Experienced by Communities living next to Amboseli National Park and Kimana Conservancy in Kenya	Dr. Margaret Wachu Gichuhi (Kenya)
An Investigation into Community Fishing Practices around Mnemba Island, Zanzibar, Tanzania	Prof. Kevin Mearns (South Africa)
The Hunting Ban and its Aftermath: The case of Poverty Alleviation and Biodiversity	Prof. Joseph E. Mbaiwa (Botswana)
Plenary debate: Best practices in community benefits from tourism in protected areas	
Video presentation: Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism Certification as a Conservation Tool for Biodiversity in Small Island Developing States	Marissa Altman
Video presentation: Anthropological approaches of tourism in SIDS	Prof. Thomas Ericsson
Session 7: Sensitization and Awareness: Tools and best practices to involve local populations and tourists in sustainable tourism	Dr. Madina Regnault
Video presentation: Sustainable Tourism? Be my guest! - The case of Aruba’s Bucuti and Tara Beach Resort	Francielle A. Laclé (Aruba)
The Impact of Environmental Degradation & Community Involvement	Ehad Bhaukaurally (Seychelles)
Social impacts of the Solid Waste & Tourism issues: how to involve locals and tourists alike in sustainable waste management	Katharina Raab & Prof. Ralf Wagner (Germany)
Using pre-dive briefings to change tourist diver behavior in Guam, Mariana Islands	Ashton Williams (Guam)
We can make a difference...#AnseForbans	Lisa Laporte-Booyse (Seychelles)



Session 8: Round table Employment and Training in Sustainable Tourism: Tools to Reduce Poverty in SIDS	
Sustainable Tourism as a Tool for Employment and Reducing Poverty in SIDS	Frederick Thomas (France)
Using SOCMON as a Tool to Involve Islanders in Develop Community Based Tourism and Provide Need Based Training to Foster Sustainable Product Enhancement	Dr. Vineeta Hoon (India)
Approach and Processes Developed by IOC for Sustainable Tourism in Indian Ocean	Véronique Espitalier-Noël (Indian Ocean)
Questions and conclusions of round table	Frederick Thomas (France)
Gala dinner at AVANI Seychelles Barbarons Resort Keynote: Daniella Payet, Founder Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Foundation	

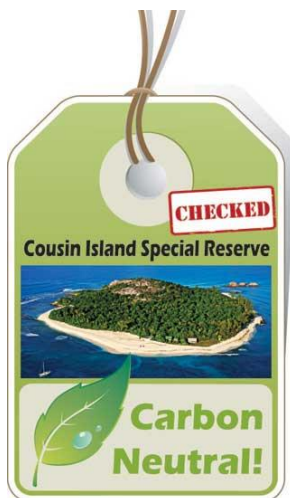


Field Visits

Over the weekend, international delegates enjoyed a series of field visits introducing them to some of the highlights of Seychelles in terms of conservation and ecotourism. After sailing with a catamaran from Mahe to Cousin, participants enjoyed a private guided tour of the Cousin Island Special Reserve by Nature Seychelles wardens, followed by an authentic lunch at Villa de Mer and a guided visit to the UNESCO site Vallée de Mai. The next day, the group took the boat to Cerf Island in the St Anne Marine Park, where the Cerf Island Conservation Programme (CICP) took them on a snorkel tour around the reef and a hike.

Cousin Island and Vallée de Mai

Saturday, November 25th



Cousin Island

Cousin is a 27ha granitic island located 2 km west of Praslin Island in the Republic of Seychelles. The island is protected by Seychellois law as a Special Reserve area, which extends 400 meters offshore around the island. It is an **IUCN Protected Area**

Category 1a, which is a strict nature reserve where people's visits and their impacts are strictly controlled to ensure protection of the conservation values. It is also designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) an area recognized as being of global importance for the conservation of birds and is one of the sites of highest ornithological interest in Seychelles.



Today, Cousin is managed by Nature Seychelles. Conservation activities include monitoring of the island's biodiversity, research, re-introduction of endangered species such as the Seychelles Magpie Robin, ecotourism and education.

Vallée de Mai

A living remnant of the ancient palm forests on Praslin, the Vallée de Mai is the green heart of Praslin Island and contains the Seychelles' largest intact forest of the endemic coco de mer palm. At only 19.5ha the Vallée de Mai is one of the world's smallest natural UNESCO World Heritage Sites and millions of years of isolation have led to the evolution of many unique species in this forest that are found nowhere else in the world. This mysterious forest first received national protection in 1966 when it was declared a Nature Reserve by the government. Later, in 1983, its international significance and outstanding value





were recognised when it was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) was awarded the stewardship of this important area in 1989.

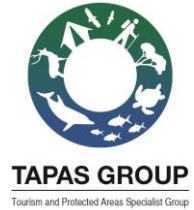
The Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) is a non-profit charitable organisation that was established as a public trust by the government of Seychelles in 1979. SIF manages and protects the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Aldabra Atoll and the Vallée de Mai and has the President of Seychelles, Danny Faure, as Patron.



Description of the tour:

- Sailing with a catamaran from Mahe to Cousin
- 200m before participants reached Cousin Island, transferred to one of the Warden boats, and transported to island
- Private guided tour of the Cousin Island Special Reserve by Nature Seychelles wardens; explanation of the special biodiversity and highlights of Cousin Island
- Authentic lunch at Villa de Mer
- Guided visit to the UNESCO site Vallée de Mai





Cerf Island

Sunday, November 26th

As one of the five islands within St. Anne's Marine Park, Cerf Island is surrounded by coral reefs which have been negatively impacted by the various land reclamation projects, the 1998 and 2016 el Niño events as well as the 2004 tsunami leaving much of the coral destroyed. Cerf Island Conservation Program aims to protect the fragile biodiversity by partaking in coral reef restoration efforts, maintaining the terrestrial environment as well as educating visitors to the island.



Description of the tour:

- Boat trip to Cerf island in the St Anne Marine Park
- Presentation and guided snorkels by the Cerf Island Conservation Programme (CICP) to visit the restoration sites
- Lunch at L'Habitation
- Free afternoon for snorkelling, hikes, kayaking or relaxing on the beach





Acknowledgements

The organizers wish to thank all their partners, sponsors and all participants, presenters and facilitators for making this event a very special event for Seychelles in our journey towards GSTC destination certification, facilitating many meaningful and fruitful encounters and new partnerships!

Some of the feedback received from participants:

"This meeting was incredibly important as it brought together many people who are not just tucked in an academic ivory tower dispensing theoretical opinion on Ecotourism, but real -world people instead, dealing with challenges and working out solutions to make Tourism work for Protected Areas, Nature and people."

"It was well organized and it must have taken a massive effort! Well done. You are all now the pioneers of academic conferences in Seychelles."

"I am expressing my appreciation for the full support provided to me to attend, participate and share in the SIDS Sustainable Tourism Event, I have built many new friends and partners and already through email many have responded."

"Best field trip I have ever been on. Excellent arrangements."

"The field trip was a show stopper and breathtaking. The variations of sea blues, sunset on the boat... I still have no words to explain the feeling. The islands are well preserved."



List of Participants

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