



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CERTIFICATION ALLIANCE AFRICA ("THE ALLIANCE")

7TH ANNUAL MEETING - 8 MAY 2015

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT FOR THE PERIOD MAY 2014 – APRIL 2015

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It is my pleasure to deliver the Chairperson's report to the 7th annual meeting of the Alliance.

Over the past year, the Secretariat and Management Committee focussed on laying the foundations of a more sustainable Alliance while the Portfolio Committees had varying degrees of success – and unfortunately, less than successful achievements.

One of the challenges faced by the Alliance Portfolio Committees over the past few years has been the question of member participation, and this year saw the amalgamation of the Impact Analysis Portfolio Committee with the more active Market Development Committee due to difficulties in getting effective participation and support from members. While the amalgamation has not necessarily affected the work of the Alliance negatively – and perhaps added relevance and weight to the marketing group, it should serve as a 'indicator' to members of the need to become more active in the work of the various groups in an effort to ensure the relevance of the Alliance itself.

Under the guidance of their respective chairpersons, the Committee's achieved a number of their work plan targets for the year. Among the highlights of the past year, the following are worth mentioning:

1. Standards and sharing of best practice Portfolio Committee (PFC)

Under the able guidance of Heidi Van Der Watt (International Centre for Responsible Tourism South Africa), the committee

- Uploaded five Responsible Tourism standards of participating members were incorporated into the International Trade Centre (ITC) Standards Map (www.standardsmap.org), providing the Alliance with greater clarity about the compatibility of standards across the Alliance;
- A reduced membership fee was negotiated with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) regarding GSTC Recognition for members of the Alliance;
- Involvement with the development of the ISO Responsible Tourism standards through TC228

2. Market Development Portfolio Committee

The Chairperson for this PFC is Sonja Gottlebe (Go To Madagascar), and the following was achieved:

- The merger of the Impact Analysis PC was completed in 2014, adding strength to this Committee with the addition of Anna Spenceley (Stand cc).
- Dialogue took place with strategic partners took place at the following events:
 - Adventure Travel World Summit (Ireland) – Sonja Gottlebe
 - Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism (GPST) Symposium (Namibia) – Hazel Milne (Eco Awards Namibia), Jennifer Seif and Manuel Bollmann (Fair Trade Tourism)
 - ITB Berlin – Sonja Gottlebe, Netsai Sibanda and Manuel Bollmann
 - World Travel Market (WTM) Africa (Cape Town) – Netsai Sibanda, Louise de Waal (Green Girls in Africa), Heidi van der Watt and Lisa Scriven (Levelle Perspectives)
- Development of marketing collateral included the design and completion of the
 - ‘Guaranteed Guide to Responsible Tourism’ brochure
 - ‘Our Alliance in Africa’ brochure
- Uploading of case studies onto the Alliance website (Fair Trade Tourism, Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label and Ecotourism Kenya). Case studies can be viewed at the following link: <http://www.sustainabletourismalliance.net/case-studies/>

3. Advocacy and Lobbying Portfolio Committee

The Committee, under the guidance of Bekithemba Langalibelele (South African National Department of Tourism), achieved

- Engagement with the TripAdvisor Green Leader Programme was concluded. While the programme is not being expanded to Africa, the Alliance will continue dialogue to explore ways of facilitating this initiative in Africa.
- GSTC Lobby for an Alliance member to the Board was concluded with Heidi van der Watt retaining her seat on the GSTC Board of Directors.
- Our involvement with Eco Mark Africa continues with representation being provided by Heidi on their advisory panel and standards working group. The standard was approved by ARSO (African Regional Standards Organisation).
- A process has been started to develop a set of tools to assist members in lobbying government and the private sector in support of responsible tourism in Africa. As this activity was not completed during the period under review, the activity will be carried into 2015 – 2016.

Finance

One of the challenges identified in 2014 was the financial security of the Alliance, and this year the Management Committee had long and complicated discussions on the way forward. There was no disagreement on the potential for the Alliance to fail when (a) funding is no longer secure and (b) the withdrawal of the Secretariat.

A work group was established to investigate the various funding options that were available to the Alliance and the group identified a number of potential models. These included

Scenario	Sustainability model	Corresponding structure
A	The current model is retained with the caveat the Secretariat is solely responsible for providing time and cash for activities. NOTE: this is currently in the range of R1 million+ inclusive of staff time, overheads and expenditure for specific activities.	Voluntary association, with enhanced governance procedures (e.g. constitution, voting rights, membership criteria) – no new legal entity
B	The current model is retained but time/cash is invested by members for specific activities e.g. the annual symposium and AGM; publication of collateral. Public sector members should commit more strongly to sustaining the Alliance.	As above. Where members provide finance these costs may be payable directly to vendors rather than channelled via the Secretariat.
C	The Alliance implements membership fees, on a graduating scale. This is not likely to provide significant finance and may result in member attrition. Networks, association and similar NEVER ride on the back of membership fees.	Current voluntary model will suffice (cf. GPST)
D	In addition to annual membership fees, the Alliance adopts a “fee for service” model. Members could pay e.g. for training, attendance at annual events, development of projects and fundraising. Note that the GSTC has taken this approach, which has not boosted its financial position and has alienated some members.	As above OR create a new legal entity
E	The Alliance develops specific, time and geographically bounded projects, which the Secretariat in partnership with members can market to donors. Members need to take more initiative.	If donors prefer to provide funding directly to project parties, no need for legal entity. However a % of funding should revert to Alliance to cover overheads/staff time and as a “finder’s fee” where the Secretariat raises the money.

Each of the options was considered for submission and adoption at this AGM, with initial thoughts being given to the possibility of establishing a membership or service fee structure that could be used to fund some of the activities of the Alliance. However, consideration was given to the experiences of similar organisations in other parts of the world which suggested membership fees tend to become counterproductive and that this ultimately leads to the collapse of alliances of this

nature. For this – and other reasons considered by the working group, the Management Committee came to the conclusion that while this could be a viable option at some future point in our evolution, the current status and development of the Alliance called for alternate sources of funding.

Donor funding remains an important source for the immediate future, and there is a lot of goodwill among donor agencies that can be leveraged, so a decision was made to step-up interactions and negotiations with our existing sources and to seek others with the potential to cover project specific funding while the Alliance continues to grow and expand its interaction with National and Regional organisations.

It was also agreed that stronger ownership of the Alliance by its members was necessary. National and Regional members of the Alliance will be approached to provide project-specific grants and support for the activities of the Alliance, while sponsorships will be sought by the Secretariat and Management Committee to cover events like the annual workshop and AGM in an effort to become less dependent upon grants and aid.

While not large, part of the budgets for the Alliance are allocated to travel and the costs associated with events of this nature, and it may become necessary for members to cover their own costs in future years as part of their commitment to the Alliance and its activities. The working group will continue to consider and source alternate means of financial aid in the coming year and members are invited to submit their views, suggestions and opinions on what has been done so far.

Our immediate funding situation is secured for at least the coming year, providing a degree of stability while we reach agreement and strategy in respect of future funding opportunities. It goes without saying that our gratitude for the support we have been provided by FTT and SECA has been immensely important to the development of the Alliance. We remain very grateful for the assistance and hope that this will continue for the coming years, but a realistic approach to this question is needed now rather than waiting until the need is too great to continue as this will bring the Alliance and what we stand for to an end.

Strategy

In the life of any organisation, it becomes important to review and revisit its strategic direction and focus, and in our case it is important to recognise that the Alliance was created with a mandate focused on standards and certification (rather than a broader focus on sustainability in tourism) – based to some extent on one of the underlying reasons for the collapse of its predecessor the Sustainable Tourism Network of Southern Africa (STNSA).

Best practice around the world in various sectors indicates that networks truly work when membership addresses a set of well-defined common challenges (and opportunities). A well-focused mandate limits expectations on the Secretariat and enables delivery against clear objectives. Alliances of this nature can't be "everything to everyone" as this creates mission drift, stakeholder management challenges and dilution of available resources.

The current strategic approach by the Alliance has served us well since 2012, but changing landscapes in Tourism and in the activities, vision and objectives of needs of our members makes it necessary to review and perhaps question our organisational direction and the impacts we can make into the future of sustainable tourism in general.

To this end, the Management Committee has decided to call a special meeting in September this year at which the future strategy and direction of the Alliance will be workshopped and formulated for presentation to the membership in May 2016. This meeting will address issues such as, mandate funding and other strategic issues and will hopefully result in a rejuvenated and focussed direction for us all.

As part of this strategic vision, your management Committee is of the opinion that the any changes to the Alliance structure should follow the adoption of a clear strategy and the securing of resources for at least three more years – subject to your approval and support, to ensure our sustainability and effectiveness.

Membership

We continue to experience growth in the membership of the Alliance and I am happy to report that membership grew by 46% in the past year and that we now have forty one members representing fourteen countries across Africa, the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe. Southern Africa is well represented and we are thankful for the high number of national representatives that are now actively involved in the Alliance.

Last year, we received a mandate to consider the possible categories of membership that could be recognised by the Alliance, and we are pleased to have the opportunity to present you with our deliberations in this regard.

Constitution

Perhaps the most important activity undertaken in the past year has been the development of a constitution for the Alliance. The draft has been circulated and debated to obtain a vote in this plenary and to provide the basis of future development of the Alliance itself. The final document will not be perfect – it can't be in an organisation at this stage of its development, but for the first time we will have a formalised document that can guide our strategy and provide a degree of legitimacy to our activities and objectives.

Like any document of this nature, the Constitution must be considered 'work in progress' and as a collective we need to play an active role in its further development to ensure that the Alliance operates and exists within the parameters of responsible development and good governance.

General

Our roots as an organisation can be traced back to 2007 with the establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Network Southern Africa (STNSA). The Network was initially funded via European Union funding during 2007-2008 and then a grant from the Southern African Trust, which expired in 2010. The rationale for establishing STNSA was to mobilise stakeholders in SADC, primarily with a stake in sustainable tourism standards and certification, to share knowledge and experience with a view to addressing common challenges.

The collapse of the STNSA in 2011 eventually gave rise to the formation of the Alliance and since then we have grown and our voice has become recognised domestically, regionally and internationally. In spite of this, we face challenges in the coming years as the face of our industry

changes and as new and perhaps more challenging opportunities arise, and we need to ensure that our voice continues to be heard and that we become the representative structure for responsible tourism across the region and the broader continent.

The achievements of the past year have been impressive, and while we are still a young organisation, I believe we are in a position to influence beyond our 'weight class' quite effectively. We are recognised by a number of organisations and regional governments as an important role-player and I am confident that under the guidance of the EXCO and our members, the Alliance will continue to grow and prosper.

We have challenges, among which is perhaps ensuring our relevance and potential in this important field. Harmonisation of standards and discussions and initiatives to eradicate duplication will become an important focus in the coming year while the Alliance needs to make serious efforts to lobby and encourage change at industry, government and private sector levels.

Thanks

None of the work that we have undertaken this past year would be possible without the dedicated commitment of our Secretariat. Netsai, Malebo and others at FTT have coordinated and guided the Portfolio Committees in their respective tasks through the year and provided exceptional support to the Management Committee, ensuring that the Alliance continues to develop and grows.

It would be remiss of me not to make special mention of a notable absentee at this year's AGM and conference. Jennifer Seif has been a part of the Alliance from its inception nearly ten years ago, and has played a pivotal part in its development. Her support, guidance and active involvement in every aspect of our activities for the past few years and while we miss her contributions in person this year, she has provided immeasurable support and guidance to myself and the EXCO and we look forward to her continued involvement into the future.

My special thanks go to my Vice Chair Hazel Milne for her support and involvement, and to the chairpersons and members of the various Portfolio Committees. Without your commitment and hard work, we would not have achieved what we have this year.

Finally, and by no means least, thank you to the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) for providing resources to fund most of the work of the Secretariat and for making our 2015 conference and annual meeting the success it has been.

Thank you

Greg McManus

Managing Director, Heritage Environmental Management Company and Alliance Chairperson