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Doing “Green” Business in the Coral Triangle

The case for sustainable tourism

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This report is a synthesis of the global and regional business case for sustainability in the Coral Triangle region. This document provides a concise overview of why ‘going green’ in the Coral Triangle makes good business sense, particularly when it comes to the natural marine and coastal assets of the region. Making a commitment to sustainability and “green” growth is not just about attracting new market opportunities for business and investment; globally it is about protecting the Coral Triangle, the world’s most diverse marine environment.

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to Richard Leck for reviewing drafts of this report and for providing valuable suggestions.

OVERVIEW



If tourism were a country, it would have one of the world's largest GDP's (Gross Domestic Product). Tourism is the largest business sector of the world economy, accounting for nine percent of global GDP, one in 13 jobs globally, and 35 percent of the world's export services.⁷ In the Coral Triangle, tourism is a vital provider of income and livelihoods for millions of people. But tourism is also responsible for a high consumption of natural resources.

Tourism is also an exceptionally dynamic industry. A significant and consistent trend in recent times is a shift by tourists to favour companies that go beyond a business-as-usual approach to their operations and implement best practices in their environmental management.¹

To take advantage of growing business opportunities in "green" tourism, businesses in the Coral Triangle region must boost their "green" credentials by implementing more sustainable practices. Without such measures they risk losing out in the environmentally-aware markets of North America, Europe and Japan.

Key business drivers for sustainability

- Global economic integration is driving standards for environmental performance
- The environmentally aware middle-classes have embraced concepts of sustainability in their consumption
- The information revolution has increased scrutiny of corporate environmental performance
- Urban residents are demanding greater environmental services and expect the corporations that they work for to be responsible global citizens
- Industrialisation brings pressures and opportunities to modernise processes and practices and to bring them in line with global environmental standards

Source: ADB, 2005 ¹

"Green" business opportunities

- Save costs by reducing inefficient practices
- Reduce risk through engagement with stakeholders and by improving social responsibility
- Build reputation by increasing environmental efficiency
- Develop human capital through better human resource management
- Improve access to capital through better governance

Source: SustainAbility, 2002 ⁹

Key Recommendations

The first step in making the most of opportunities for sustainable tourism in the Coral Triangle is to contact WWF or one of the industry associations such as the Pacific Asia Travel Association or Oceania

Sustainable Tourism Alliance (see contact details at the end of the document).

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE CORAL TRIANGLE?

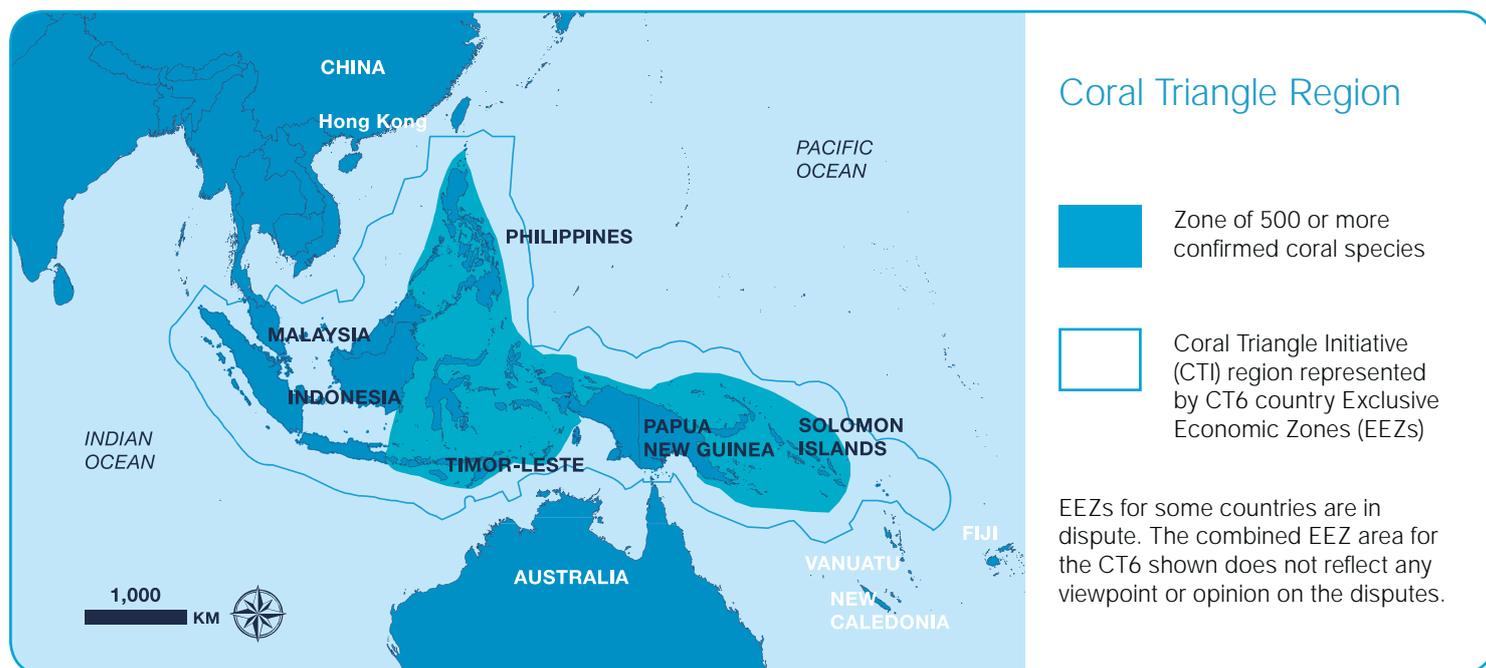


Figure 1. The Coral Triangle

The Coral Triangle

- One percent of the Earth's surface
- 75 percent of all coral species known to science
- More than 3,000 species of reef fish and commercially-valuable open ocean species including yellowfin tuna, skipjack tuna, bigeye tuna
- Six of the world's seven species of marine turtles including green, hawksbill, olive ridley, leatherback, loggerhead and flatback
- More than 100 million people, along with thousands of small and medium businesses rely heavily on healthy marine resources which are generated by this vast and thriving ecosystem

The Coral Triangle encompasses Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. These countries have launched a Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security that aims to transform marine resource management within this region.

> Find out more:
www.cti-secretariat.net

With its abundant beaches, coral reefs and idyllic coastal settings, it is not surprising that tourism is a major component of the economy of most countries in the Coral Triangle. What makes the region unique is that despite covering just one per cent of the earth's surface, it includes 30 percent of the world's coral reefs, and 76 percent of its reef-building coral species.

The Coral Triangle is also special because of the high-level attention that has been focused recently on its protection. In May 2009, the leaders of the Coral Triangle countries—Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste—launched the Coral Triangle Initiative which aims to transform marine resource management within this six million km² region.

The region is not just a natural wonderland but an economic and social powerhouse. It sustains the lives of more than 120 million people, along with thousands of small and medium businesses that heavily rely on its marine and coastal resources remaining healthy. Tourism in the Coral Triangle is expected to grow strongly, despite the effects of the recent global financial crisis and factors such as terrorism and disease.

However, the Coral Triangle is under threat from over-exploitation, environmental degradation, poverty, and the global economic recession—all compounded by severe climate change—making a compelling case for sustainable investment and business in the Coral Triangle. The region is also facing rapidly expanding

populations, economic growth and the pressures of international trade.

Tourism provides not only foreign income, but an important opportunity for communities to make a living and to supply the tourism industry with locally-produced goods and services. In the best examples, sustainable tourism makes a positive contribution to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the people and places that are visited. Because tourism is as much an experience as a commodity there are powerful reasons for tourism operators to provide authentic and unspoilt environments and cultural experiences.

Tourism represents one of the world's largest industries, generating 11 percent of the global gross domestic product and employing 200 million people worldwide. In 80 percent of all countries tourism is one of the five top export earners and in 60 countries, it is the number one source of foreign income. The tourism industry is of particular importance to developing nations and is the leading source of foreign exchange for 83 percent of developing countries. In 2004, nature tourism was growing three times faster than the tourism industry as a whole.

IES, 2006 ²

WHAT ARE THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL DRIVERS FOR "GREEN" TOURISM BUSINESS?



Growing legislative, social and market pressures are pushing the corporate world to take greater responsibility for its environmental performance. This pressure is being felt at all stages of the supply chain, from the sourcing of raw product to final retail, and even beyond. Responses to these growing pressures have seen the rapid adoption of global environmental standards and management practices, including in the Asia Pacific region.

Given the increasingly central role of the private sector in global governance issues, the public is demanding that businesses manage their operations in a manner that not only enhances economic

prosperity and promotes social justice, but also ensures environmental protection in the regions and countries where it is based.¹⁰

The UN Global Compact is a useful example. The Compact is one of the more prominent initiatives for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. It is growing at a rate of roughly 100 new participants per month, with the current total of active business and non-business participants standing at over 7,000 organizations in more than 135 countries. Perhaps even more importantly, over 1,000 companies have been de-listed

since 2008 for failing to comply with the requirements of the Compact.¹¹

There are over 2,000 multilateral and regional environment agreements, many of which impose binding obligations on signatories, and these are often translated into legislation regarding the environmental impacts and procedures of corporations. To be competitive and meet expectations, businesses in the Asia Pacific region will be required to comply with increasingly stringent requirements of multinational corporations operating in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

KEY DRIVERS TOWARDS CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY IN ASIA

The Asia Pacific region faces enormous environmental and social challenges. It will be the companies that take these challenges seriously that will capture an increasing share of the market at the expense of those that persist with a business-as-usual approach.

Pressure for companies to "green" their supply chains and processes can arise from both the pull of market forces as well as the push of regulation and other external drivers. In recent years these factors have begun to impact on business operating in the Asia Pacific region.¹

The challenge for corporations is not simply to meet basic environmental compliance but to go beyond compliance and embrace a vision for sustainability. Tourism companies in the Coral Triangle cannot afford to ignore these pressures, and many will be forced to change or disappear if they cannot meet these new expectations. This is also good news for progressive companies that seek to capitalize on the opportunity for increasing environmental investments in the region, as well as the growing demand for environment-friendly goods and services.

A range of industry-based voluntary standards and agreements are increasingly acting as *de facto* environmental performance measures across a variety of industries, and are widespread in the tourism sector. In a number of cases these

voluntary schemes are backed by third-party certification, monitoring and regular audits.

The Asian Development Bank's 2005 Environmental Outlook report identified five primary drivers that are affecting the ways business operates in the Asia Pacific region.¹ Taken together they can be a potent force for the adoption of improved environmental performance by corporations:

Global economic integration

In an increasingly globalised world, standards for environmental performance are becoming the price for entry into markets that are increasingly avoiding environmental risk and demanding evidence of sustainable practices and products.

The environmentally aware middle-classes

As consumers become more affluent and discerning they move beyond simple price signals in their purchasing choices and start to embrace concepts of sustainability in their consumption. Products that are environmentally certified, fair-trade, and organic are capturing an increasing share of the world market.

The information revolution

With the ongoing reach of the internet, satellite TV and mobile phones with video capability, few places remain that are not

under the scrutiny of the public and media. The environmental and social impacts of corporations can be captured by citizens and delivered to global media outlets and the board-rooms of virtually any corporation in the world.

Urbanisation

The world's population is becoming increasingly urbanised and people in cities have greater access to education and information and a greater choice in the goods and services they buy. Increasingly urban dwellers are demanding greater environmental services and expect the corporations that they work for to be responsible global citizens.

Industrialisation

While industrialisation may result in an initial negative environmental outcome, it also brings pressures and opportunities to modernise processes and practices and to bring them rapidly into line with global standards. Given the lower technology-base of much of the region compared to developed countries, this pressure to modernise may even be more rapid in the Asia Pacific region than elsewhere.

Public opinion supports the move to better corporate environmental performance

A recent global survey of public opinion found that 69 percent of people said that companies should be operationally responsible for not harming the environment while 67 percent said that companies as responsible citizens should restore the environment for the future. Almost 80 percent said that corporations should be responsible for restoring the environment for future generations.¹ Advocacy groups are mobilising these consumer sentiments

to build the case for both voluntary product stewardship schemes and greater environmental regulation of business performance. Business leaders in the Asia Pacific region need to be aware of these pressures as well as their potential to create new markets for sustainably produced goods and services, e.g. the 2008 Eco Asia Expo Trade Fair, Hong Kong.

Business leaders at the 2009 APEC CEO Summit in Singapore re-affirmed the importance of climate change and sustainability as key factors for the future of the Asian economies.

"There is consensus that climate change concerns are real and need to be addressed. The priorities and means to do so however remain open to debate. Businesses emphasized taking steps where there are opportunities for development and investments that are both economically viable and environmentally sound. There was also support to liberalize trade in environmental goods and services."

ASIA PACIFIC VOICES, 2009³

"GREENING" THE SUPPLY CHAIN



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Company representatives from the Asian business community are well aware of the importance of supply-chain relationships in creating pressure on small and medium-sized enterprises to improve their environmental performance. Eager to reduce

risk in their main markets, large global corporations are increasingly requiring that supply firms in the Asia Pacific region adopt certification schemes and environmental audits as proof of their environmental credentials.¹ For the tourism sector this

may result in the need to ensure that suppliers of everything from infrastructure, waste management services, energy and consumer goods are aware of the need for the development of environmental standards and reporting.

Case study: Philippine Business for Social Progress

Many companies realize that the environmental soundness of their products and services is linked to the sustainability of raw materials sourced from suppliers and business partners. Although a number of companies have already initiated internal efforts towards environmental stewardship, their

suppliers may not subscribe to the same level of environmental responsibility. As a result, companies are increasingly looking for opportunities to influence their suppliers' social and environmental performance. The Greening the Supply Chain Project (GSC) project enables companies to institutionalize policies and mechanisms to address

environmental concerns through supply chain environmental management.

PBSP-CENTER FOR CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP, 2009⁴

Voluntary environmental standards and agreements are widely accepted by companies and consumers

The development and adoption of voluntary environmental standards and agreements has grown rapidly in the past few years. Although many of the original schemes had

little credibility to begin with, the trend is increasingly toward the development of more precise and specific standards backed up by use of third-party certification by accredited

certifiers and regular audits as a means of verification of compliance. In the tourism sectors, rigorous global voluntary standards are widespread and growing in their impact.

THE ROLE OF CERTIFICATION IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE CORAL TRIANGLE

The Asian Productivity Organization (APO) has produced a manual on "green" certification for the tourism industry, which provides a comprehensive overview of the role of "green" certification in tourism, and the methods and different approaches that exist.⁸

The APO identified three major drivers for sustainable tourism:

1 Increasing regulatory pressure and awareness of cost savings

Governments in Asia are increasingly moving to regulate the tourism sector and its associated infrastructure such as waste water treatment plants, transport routes, and waste treatment facilities. These regulations have mostly been aimed at the larger hotels and attractions in an attempt to target the most significant environmental impacts of the industry. In addition, hotel developers and operators are also increasingly aware of the cost savings that can be achieved through better environmental management practices. Environmental concern is a particular driver for both the niche market ecotourism sector and the top-end providers that cater for

wealthy and discerning travellers. However, for all the reasons cited in the first half of this document there is every reason to expect that these environmental concerns will rapidly impact on the whole of the supply chain up to and including the provision of government-funded infrastructure projects. Still, most countries in the region have a long way to go before sustainability is deeply embedded into large-scale infrastructure planning—including tourism development.

2 Awareness of the impacts of mass tourism

In its 2007 study of visitor travel intentions¹² the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) found that 37 percent of visitors planning to visit the region would be more inclined to choose environmentally-friendly tourism products and in 2009, 34 percent stated that they would pay extra for environmentally-friendly tourism (see figure 1). One of the biggest growing markets in the tourism industry is China, with PATA reporting that 84 percent of Chinese are attracted by the local scenery and 79 percent by sunshine and beaches. These are factors that clearly favour the Coral Triangle as a destination for this growing sector of the industry.

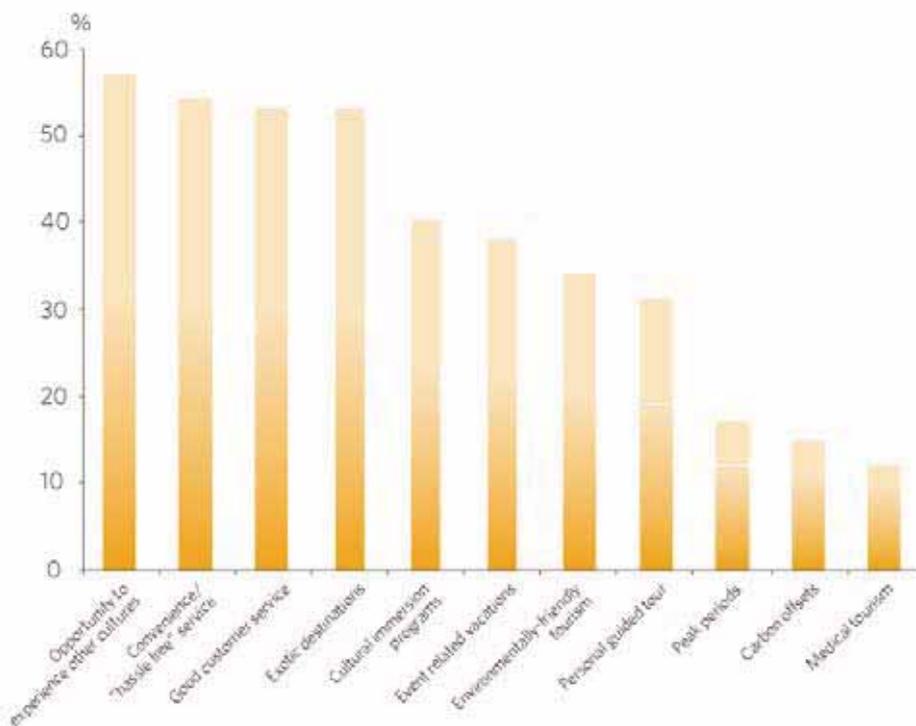


Figure 1. Number of survey respondents indicating that they would pay extra for environment-friendly tourism (source: PATA, 2009)¹²

Adoption of sustainability programs by business is growing in the Asia-Pacific markets

More than 700 corporations – including many operating in the Asia-Pacific region have adopted the GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines and 35 of the world's largest banks have adopted the Equator Principles, accounting for 90 percent of global project financing.

ADB, 2005¹

Case study: The luxury resort Nirvana Roemah Air, Lombok, Indonesia

CV Manunggal Aswinabawa Sejahtera (CV MAS) was established in 2002, in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, as an operator of an ecotourism facility called Nirvana Roemah Air. Nirvana is located in beautifully secluded Medang Bay, on Lombok Island, Indonesia. The company's Sustainability Report for the resort was produced in 2007 as part of the Global Reporting initiative. The report states that: "In line with increasing awareness of sustainability issues, the demand for businesses that provide services in an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible way is also growing. As a company that embraces sustainability, the purpose of this report is to provide information and insight on the way we conduct our business, not only from the commercial perspective but also from environmental and social perspectives."

CV MANUNGGAL ASWINABAWA
SEJAHTERA, 2008⁵

3 Change in attitudes of tourists and tourism professionals

The APO has concluded that "due to increased effort by national governments and international bodies, both tourists and tourism professionals in the developed and

the developing countries alike consider environmental quality essential to their business." Some major tourism operators as well as those catering for niche markets such as nature-based ecotourism are adopting global standards for environmental management. In Malaysia for example, the Shangri La Hotel group has committed to the ISO 14001 environmental management

system including the first such certifications for hotels in mainland China, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines.¹³

Elsewhere in Asia there is an emerging Corporate Social Responsibility commitment by operators following the lead established by Shangri La, El Nido Resorts,¹⁴ Banyan Tree Resorts¹⁵ and others.

The importance of certification

"Certification has become an important tool in helping transform tourism enterprises into businesses that are both successful and sustainable. By participating in a certification programme, a tourism operation's practices and policies are evaluated and verified according to a set of standards and

benchmarks. In the best-case scenario, these standards and their implementation are developed and monitored by independent third parties.

Credible and transparent certification programs reward tourism operations that exhibit best practices and help

differentiate them from those that are less environmentally and socially sound. Certification also provides intermediaries and consumers with a way to identify and access the types of tourism operations that they wish to patronize."

RAINFOREST ALLIANCE, 2007⁶

Case studies in sustainable tourism

The book *Green Your Business to Grow Your Business: Sustainable Tourism Certification Success Stories*, published by the Rainforest Alliance in 2007¹⁶ provides an overview of the experiences of a diverse range of tourism businesses around the world. The book describes how "16 pioneering hotels, lodges, tour operators, cruise ships, attractions and other tourism-related enterprises in 10 different countries obtained and maintained

certification seals from seven national and international programs. The companies that are highlighted in this publication joined their respective certification programmes for different reasons, depending on whether they saw the certification as a distinction to set them apart from the rest of the industry, a tool to help them open up new markets, or a system of self assessment to improve their environmental and general management."

This study showed that attracting customers from new markets was a key factor for many of the businesses that joined a certification programme. Some of the additional facets to their operations have included sustainability tours and workshops, tours of organic gardens or recycling facilities, guided visits to local communities and educational activities focused on local cultures or special area resources. According to the report "these initiatives have generally been met with enthusiastic approval and have helped these tourism enterprises reach a new type of client."

The development of the sustainable tourism industry has been rapid and various certification schemes have flourished to the point where they created confusion and risked their own credibility (figure 2). To provide additional global guidance on sustainable tourism, including certification, the Tourism Sustainability Council (TSC) will be established in 2010. The TSC has been developed as a "global membership council that will offer a common understanding of sustainable tourism and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles and criteria. The TSC will bring together tourism businesses presently operating to various degrees of sustainability performance, governments, UN bodies, research and academic institutions, social and environmental NGOs, certification programs, and others from distinct regions of the world."⁶



Figure 2. Several of the many tourism certification schemes (source: Noakes, 2008)¹⁷

WWF – A NATURAL "GREEN" TOURISM PARTNER

In many of the world's most beautiful places, the harm that tourism can do is already clearly discernible: more traffic, mountains of waste, unchecked consumption of resources, uncontrolled development and urban sprawl ruining coastal sceneries.

Tourism is one of the industries most closely related to WWF's core business. Most of WWF's conservation programmes all around the globe have a component that addresses tourism either as a partner in pursuing a common goal or as a target for threat reduction strategies.

WWF has experience in working with many and varied industries all around the world. WWF helped initiate the Marine Stewardship Council as well as the Forest Stewardship Council, both leading certification programmes helping consumers make more sustainable choices.

As a global organisation with a strong local presence throughout the Coral Triangle, WWF has the ability to partner on the ground while also using our networks to make links worldwide.

In the Coral Triangle, WWF is particularly interested in working with tourism businesses to:

- foster awareness of the importance of green tourism
- implement actions to adapt to climate change, such as protected areas
- reduce industry's ecological footprint while building the bottom line

STEPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

The following steps will help you develop your "green" business opportunities in the Coral Triangle:

• Develop your sustainability vision and commitment

A vision and commitment to sustainability is an essential first step in promoting your sustainable business culture. The vision and commitment should be incorporated into the highest level of your business plan.

• Review environmental impacts including suppliers and contractors

Review your current impact on the environment and review the environmental credentials of your suppliers and contractors to see if they will meet your standards and be consistent with your sustainability commitment.

• Define targets and plans and incorporate into business practice

Set targets to improve your sustainability across the major areas of your environmental impact. Ensure these targets are incorporated into your operational plans.

• Monitor, evaluate and improve

Establish a system for reporting on your sustainability targets and how they will be monitored at a senior management level. Ensure there is a process in place to seek continual improvement.

• Auditing and verification

Seek a reliable external evaluator or reputable certification system to audit and verify your environmental management system – and to achieve the external recognition for your commitment.

RESOURCES

1. Asia Business Council report on Corporate Social Responsibility: Business Solutions to Global Challenges: <http://www.asiabusinesscouncil.org/docs/BSR.pdf>
2. Asian Development Bank and the Coral Triangle: <http://www.adb.org/environment/adb-cti.asp>
3. Business Environment Council (Asia): <http://www.bec.org.hk/>
4. Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) Secretariat: <http://www.cti-secretariat.net/>
5. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Asia: <http://www.csr-asia.com/>
6. CSR Asia report The Future of CSR: 2009 Report: http://www.csr-asia.com/report/report_CSRin10_2009.pdf
7. CSR Asia Summit 2009: <http://www.csr-asia.com/summit09/>
8. Developing Value: The Business Case for Sustainability in Emerging Markets: http://www.sustainability.com/researchandadvocacy/reports_article.asp?id=142
9. Equator Principles: <http://www.equator-principles.com/>
10. Global Compact Network Asia-Pacific: <http://globalcompactasiapacific.org/home/>
11. Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria: <http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org/>
12. International Finance Corporation (IFC) sustainability: <http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/sustainability.nsf/Content/Home>
13. Marrakech Process Task Force on Sustainable Tourism: <http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/tfsustourism.shtml>
14. Oceania Sustainable Tourism Alliance: <http://www.oceaniatourismalliance.net/>
15. Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA): <http://www.pata.org>
16. Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council: <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/tourism.cfm?id=council>
17. Tropical Coasts and their Socio-Economic Importance: http://www.icriforum.org/gcrmn/SocMon_Global_Report.pdf

For more information

If you would like more information on how to take advantage of the business opportunities arising from sustainable tourism in the Coral Triangle, please contact us.

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About the WWF Coral Triangle Programme

WWF has been pioneering conservation in the Coral Triangle for more than two decades, collaborating with partners in the private sector, governmental agencies and civil society. By providing technical expertise and funding, and promoting innovative public-private partnerships, WWF is committed to ensure that the Coral Triangle Initiative catalyzes measurable changes.

Through the Coral Triangle Programme, we are working to safeguard the health of the region's natural treasures and to secure the millions of livelihoods that depend upon them by:

- Building a sustainable live reef fish trade
- Promoting sustainable tuna fisheries
- Financing marine protected areas
- Protecting marine turtles and reducing their bycatch
- Reducing the impacts of climate change

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