

# ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE STATE OF ECUADOR TO FOLLOW UP ON ISSUES OF CONCERN IDENTIFIED BY THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Ecuador has demonstrated its commitment to the conservation of Galapagos through the implementation of actions and projects that enable moving forward towards the fulfillment of the recommendations issued by UNESCO.

This report is in fulfillment of decision WHC 36COM 7B.32 of the World Heritage Committee at its 36th Session in Saint Petersburg, Russia, from June 24 to July 6, 2012, and provides a summary of the changes and progress made respecting Galapagos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, since the last report.

The areas considered as priorities in this decision were:

**Biosecurity.** Two important achievements are evident in this matter. In the first place, it was urgent to have a strong institution capable of addressing one of the major threats in the islands: invasive species. Thus in 2012, the Agency for Regulation and Control of Biosecurity and Quarantine for Galapagos (ABG) was established to take charge of controlling and regulating the entry and spread of exotic species that might endanger human health and impact on agricultural activities, disrupting the economic system and threatening the ecological integrity of the islands.

Secondly, progress has been made in consolidating a system for optimal sea cargo transport to Galapagos, through the preparation of a Master Plan to be completed in the first half of 2014. This Plan proposes the establishment of a single port that will allow effective control of the 5,500 tonnes of cargo that enter Galapagos monthly. The port's design reflects the complexity and special features that the quarantine chain requires. Furthermore, Aeolian Cove on Baltra Island has been chosen as the site for the hub port in response to the recommendation made by UNESCO some years back to the effect that this island is the perfect place for the port and should also be used as a single reception point for the archipelago in order to maintain greater control over entering cargo.

Considering the importance of self-sufficiency in organic products, the Galapagos Bioagriculture Plan is a significant development that reduces the risk of introduced species. The Plan is expected to be implemented in the second half of 2014.

Another achievement in biosecurity described in this report is the effort that various institutions have made in controlling and monitoring introduced

species such as the African snail, the fruit fly, and the fire ant, among others. Regarding the restoration of island ecosystems, the impact made by the three nurseries in reforesting emblematic species such as *Scalesia pedunculata*, and *Miconia robinsoniana*, among others, is noteworthy.

**Tourism.** It has been evident since the Sustainable Tourism Summit held in 2010 that the long-term outlook for tourism in Galapagos is the transition to ecotourism. The Government of Ecuador has instituted a moratorium on the expansion of hotel accommodations in the Galapagos, and has directed the Ministry of Tourism to continue the process of regularization and disposition of tourist accommodation in the province. Likewise, the regulations for basic environmental and tourism quality requirements have been issued must now be observed by tourist accommodation establishments.

In the same vein, the study "Building Management Scenarios and Tourism Planning in the Galapagos Islands through the Use of Modeling and Simulation Tools," whose purpose was to determine social, environmental, and economic indicators to develop a model reflecting where Galapagos stands at the present time and to project stabilization, stagnation, and visitor-flow growth and decline scenarios. To encourage longer visits in Galapagos while discouraging short visits (associated with an increased demand for rapid mobility, number of trips, and risk of introduced species) the establishment of differentiated rates according to the number of days of stay has been considered in the proposed amendment to the Organic Law for the Special Regime, which would help to refine the market to a more suitable profile for Galapagos.

To encourage the development of the ecotourism model, four new ecotourism routes have been identified. An Experimental Ecotourism Project is being developed for Floreana Island which features the creation of a community enterprise to co-manage a 7-km trail from the high part of the island to the Post Office visitor site, which was used mostly by cruise ships. Two new information points on Santa Cruz and San Cristóbal islands promote and inform about ecotourism opportunities, mainly those provided by local operations. The Galapagos Tourism Observatory has gradually become a source of information, guidance, and monitoring of tourist dynamics. Primary information is collected monthly through 400 surveys at the Baltra and San Cristóbal airports at the end of their visit.

**Governance.** The creation in May 2013 of the Provincial Directorate of the Judiciary Council in Galapagos Province in order to ensure respect for due process and access to justice in the province was a very important legal

accomplishment for Galapagos that is in compliance with the UNESCO recommendations regarding the ability of judges in Galapagos to hear environmental crimes.

Consistent with the above, as part of its renewal and technical restructuring process, the Judicial Council decided in September 2013 to create two Multi-Competent Court Units, one based in San Cristóbal and the other in Santa Cruz, where in addition to environmental crime, civil and criminal offenses will also be prosecuted. The creation of this unit ensures that environmental offenses will also have their due process and be treated at the same level of importance as human rights crimes.

It should be pointed out that a selection process based on qualifications, competitive examinations, and interviews was conducted for the appointment of judges to these two units, and the chosen officers of the court were given an initial training course by the Judicial Council.

**Experiential Fishing.** On October 4, 2012, the Participatory Management Board (JMP) resolved to approve the reformulation of Experiential Artisanal Fishing as a locally operated Special Tourist Activity henceforth to be known as Experiential Fishing and governed by the Special Regulations for Tourism in Protected Areas (RETANP).

With these JMP agreements, the discrepancy between experiential artisanal fishing and sport fishing has been conclusively defined, and the latter is finally rejected, with experiential fishing now accepted as the only tourist activity involving fishing because it seeks a closer experience between tourists and the artisanal fishermen of Galapagos and their endeavors in the Galapagos Marine Reserve. The GNPD issued a resolution in January 2013 ordering a socioeconomic and environmental assessment of this industry for its regulation and management. No more permits for this activity are to be issued for the time being. Regarding operations management, resting sites have been established in the archipelago near Santa Cruz, Santa Fe, Pinzón, Isabela, and San Cristobal islands in order to minimize and control the impact that experiential fishing may have on land areas.

The report also contains other advances related to the conservation and restoration of the Galapagos ecosystems including the management of emblematic species such as tortoises and land iguanas.