

## **Global Ecotourism Conference Announces Slate of Speakers**

**Washington, DC** – The co-organizers of the *Global Conference on Ecotourism 2007* – The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), Ecotourism Norway and UNEP – announced the list of speakers and presenters for the conference, which will be held in Oslo, Norway, May 14<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup>.

“There is a remarkable array of expertise and experience assembled for a single conference,” said David Sollitt, Executive Director of TIES. “It combines some of the best, most experienced practitioners in ecotourism worldwide with leaders from institutional, governmental and academic bodies who are unsurpassed experts in their fields.”

With the support and participation of various intergovernmental organizations, UN agencies, international NGOs, governments, and national and regional ecotourism associations, the conference seeks to develop action plans on key issues including biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation, and tourism industry reforms, according to conference organizers.

Presenters at the conference include:

Eugenio Yunis, Chief, Sustainable Development of Tourism, [World Tourism Organization \(UNWTO\)](#): Eugenio is involved in UNWTO's initiatives around sustainable tourism and poverty alleviation and community empowerment through tourism with a focus on protected areas around the world.

Arild Molstad, Journalist, Photographer, Film Producer & Tourism Consultant: Representing National Geographic in Norway, Arild is a renowned author, photographer and film producer who through his various works has addressed key issues in tourism and sustainable development.

Hitesh Mehta, Landscape Architect, [Edward Stone & Associates \(EDSA\)](#)/TIES Board member: Hitesh is the world leader in green architecture and ecolodge design. He will be presenting on authentic ecolodges and their roles in ecotourism and responsible travel.

Karen G. Lewis, Founder and Owner, [Lapa Rios Ecolodge](#): Lapa Rios Ecolodge has won the 2005 US State Department Corporate Excellence Award, and a number of other international awards, and serves as an excellent model of social and environmental responsibility in ecotourism. Karen will present on the benefits of certification for businesses and communities.

Tom Hall, Travel Editor, [Lonely Planet](#): Representing Lonely Planet, Tom will discuss the media's roles in raising awareness of sustainability issues in travel and tourism, and the challenges and opportunities for the media to communicate with travelers in passionate and engaging manner about responsible travel without preaching.

Local representatives of Basecamp Masai Mara, [Basecamp Explorer](#): The winner of the

**The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)**

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2005 Responsible Tourism Award (Protected Areas category) and the 2005 Eco-Warrior Award in Kenya, Basecamp Masai Mara was the first of the six basecamp groups established by Basecamp Explorer. The Masai Mara representatives will share their wisdom and offer first-hand learning experience through workshops in Oslo.

Jane Crouch, Responsible Travel Manager, [Intrepid Travel](#): A world leader in off-the-beaten-track travel, Intrepid is committed to environmentally, culturally and socially responsible travel. Intrepid aims to become a carbon neutral company by the end of 2009.

Topics to be presented and discussed at the conference include:

- Local Partnerships for Community-Based Ecotourism
- Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility in Travel & Tourism
- Nature and Culture Interpretation as Key Components of Ecotourism
- Architecture & Landscaping in Ecotourism
- Ecotourism and its Impacts on Wildlife

Ecotourism Norway also announced that H.M. Queen Sonja of Norway will participate in the opening plenary session on Monday, May 14. The Queen provides a unique perspective on ecotourism based on her diverse travels, according to Lelei, LeLaulu, President and CEO of Counterpart International, who is a keynote speaker for the Conference. Counterpart International is a Co-Host of the conference.

"Queen Sonja, better than most people, understands very well the fragility of both polar regions and the enormous possibilities they hold for careful, well thought-out ecotourism," said LeLaulu. "Queen Sonja was the first Queen to visit Antarctica and has also visited the Arctic island of Svalbard so she knows what is needed to conserve these highly fragile regions while enabling world citizens to experience the splendor she herself felt first hand."

"It is no accident that the National Geographic Society named Norway's fjordlands as the world's top tourism destination. Norway's immensely sensible policies start at the top -- and Her Majesty is an avid nature trekker who has spoken out on the need to preserve the country's ecological heritage," asserted LeLaulu, "so her presence at the conference adds immeasurably to the elegance and the substance of the conference."

Co-hosted by UNESCO, the United Nations Foundation, and Counterpart International, and supported by key international organizations such as IUCN, Environmental Defense, Rainforest Alliance, National Geographic Society, PAN Parks Foundation and WWF, the conference will mark an important step forward in reinforcing ecotourism's global brand, said Sollitt.

Those interested in more information on speakers, topics and conference registration are encouraged to visit the conference website: [www.ecotourismglobalconference.org](http://www.ecotourismglobalconference.org)

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