

# The Fifth World Conference of Snow and Mountain Tourism

Encamp, 27-29<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Summary



ANDORRA

5<sup>o</sup> CONGRÉS MUNDIAL  
de Turisme de Neu i de Muntanya



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## The Conference

Over 240 individuals came from all over the world to celebrate the inaugural ceremony of The Fifth World Conference of Snow and Mountain Tourism, which was presided by the Minister Spokesman of the Government offices of Economic Development, Tourism, Culture and the Universities of the Principality of Andorra, the honorable Mr. **Juli Minoves Triquell**. In his presentation, Minoves stated how climate change is a problem that affects everybody and one which also has a direct impact on tourism and leisure activities. To illustrate his point, Minoves noted that the Principality of Andorra received 11 million tourists in 2007, accounting for 60% of the annual GDP, therefore all actions regarding this topic are strategic and include state policy.

With this in mind, the Minister pointed out that a solution to climate change for countries such as Andorra is to develop major leisure activities in the summer in order to maintain the current level of tourism. Minoves also recommended improving energy efficiency through the use of solar energy and improvements to existing infrastructures.

The Mayor of Encamp, **Miquel Alís Font**, served as host and welcomed all the participants. In his speech, he emphasised the importance of this event not only for the principality, but for all countries for which climate change is now provoking economic shifts. “Climate change irrefutably affects the preservation of the natural environment and leisure activities and, therefore, the economy of the regions,” affirmed Alís. He concluded by pointing out that this phenomenon is an

### *Inauguration*





*Shardul Agrawala*

increasing reality, and debates such as those held during the conference are the beginning of the solution.

**Francesco Frangiali**, Secretary General of the WTO, emphasised the importance of a long-term vision. As evidence, he quoted a study by Météo France which concludes that at an altitude of 1,500 metres, a temperature increase of 1.8° C will cause the Northern Alps to lose 40 days from the current five-month period of snow. In other words, if the IPCC estimation that temperature levels will rise between 2° C and 4° C by the end of the century should be accurate, only those ski resorts over 2,000 metres will be able to open a minimum of 100 days, which is necessary for profitability.

One of the conclusions of the study by **Jackie Dawson**, of the University of Waterloo in Canada, estimates that shorter seasons will not greatly reduce the number of tourist visits, but will rather result in tourists skiing just as frequently but within a shorter time period. **Miriam Scaglione**, of the University of Applied Sciences of Valais, focused her presentation on the behavior of the skier in relation to the weather forecast.

## Artificial Snow

Several scientists at the conference cited the use of artificial snow as an option, affirming that it is already used at a large number of ski resorts, but adding that low temperatures are still needed in order to produce the snow. Nevertheless, the negative environmental impact of artificial snow, regarding both natural resources and noise pollution, must be studied in depth.



*Jackie Dawson*

**Marcia Phillips**, of the Federal Institute of Snow and Avalanches in Davos, Switzerland, reported on a new type of artificial snow known as “Nessy” (New Energy Efficient Snowlance System), which uses 80% less energy and produces snow with less noise and in at temperatures of up to 2° C higher. As the size of glaciers decreases, problems with the tourist infrastructure will probably occur. Global warming means warming of the permafrost, and the defrosting of this existing ice implies high risks for the infrastructure, i.e. hotels, gondolas and slopes. Phillips claims that in order to avoid the high costs of developing a new infrastructure, detailed investigations are needed before construction begins. Furthermore, **Josef Zenuhäser**, of the International Skiing Federation, affirmed that due to the altitude of the resorts in the Alps, artificial snow will only be used as a supplementary tool for important events, such as the World Cup. He also added that if the predictions of snow cover reduction occur, the world championships might have to be relocated to other countries such as Bulgaria, China, Pakistan and Lebanon.

**Shardul Agrawala**, member of the OECD and editor of the book “The Climatic Change in the European Alps”, affirmed that 1994, 2000, 2002 and 2003 were the warmest years in the last five centuries. Global warming not only affects the reduction of snow cover, but it also causes the melting of glaciers and permafrost, extreme precipitation, and changes in the occurrence of natural disasters. An OECD investigation concluded that the altitude of guaranteed snow will increase 150 metres for every 1° C rise in temperature. In other words, the lowest ski resorts will

eventually cease to exist, moving north to the top part of the mountain.

**Mila Andreeva**, of the Bulgarian Ski Federation in Sofia, and **Amitabh Sharma Jr.**, Managing Director of Power Himalayas in New Delhi, India, centred their conference on the development of new ski resorts and the investments involved in the process, highlighting that given the altitudes of their resorts - 2,700 and 4,000 metres - the decrease in snow cover will not create problems down the road.

## Energy Efficiency

Different studies show that tourism has a direct effect on CO<sub>2</sub> emission. According to **Frangiali** of the WTO, international tourist traffic is predicted to double over the next 15 years, and affirmed that it is therefore essential to focus on the development of energy efficient transportation. One of the main factors that **Frangiali** clearly credits for the rising global temperatures is the phenomenon of low-cost airlines, which has increased both the number of routes and the frequency of flights. **Jean-Paul Cerron** of CRIDEAU (University of Limoges), claims that individuals' lifestyles must change, as the habit of flying low-cost airlines for short and medium distances generates a serious environmental problem. **Sergio Blengini**, Vice President of the National Italian Gondola Association in Aosta, noted that there are ways to cut energy use and improve renewability by utilising solar, wind and hydroelectric energy.

On the American continent, especially in Argentina, resorts try to sell the snow as much as the skiing. The advertising campaign developed in Argentina over the last 4 years has certainly had success; **Hugo Sartor**, Director of Advertising and Tourism in Buenos Aires, Argentina, based this on the strategy of combining advertising aimed at diverse

*Attendants of the Congress*



*Mayors: Josep M<sup>a</sup> Camp, Rosa Ferrer and Ventura Espot*

demographics in places without snow and ski education programs in schools, a strategy which increased resort tourism between 2004 and 2007. Thus, he claimed that the use of communication and marketing is paramount in the development of snow tourism.

## Round Table

A round table was created for individuals to discuss the future of resorts. Participants included **Conrad Blanch** (Vice President of Ski Andorra and Managing Director of Grandvalira), **Laurent Reynaud** (Director of the French National Cable Car Union), **Luigi Gaido** (Institute of Economic Investigation, Turin, Italy), **Igno Kart** (President of FIANET, Austria) and **Hans Hoehener** (President of Swiss Federation of Cable Cars). This discussion clarified the new challenges that snow tourism faces given the possible changes in the coming years, and discussed its relation to skiing tourists' habits of consumption, new

*Peter Keller*



infrastructure investments, and new winter sports zones in emerging countries.

**Peter Keller**, Director of the Lausanne University Institute of Tourism and Director of Switzerland Tourism Services, summarised the most important conclusions of the Fifth World Conference of Snow and Mountain Tourism. He affirmed that it is nothing new to claim that global warming was first recorded in 1955 and that it is caused principally by daily human habits. “This century, we await a 1° C - 4° C increase in temperature. Following the 100-day rule, the current total of 609 ski resorts that exist today will drop to 500 by the year 2020, to 404 in 2050, and to 202 resorts by the end of century, all of which will be in Austria, Switzerland, France, Germany and Italy”, reported **Keller**. For those remaining resorts, the greenhouse effect will have to be stabilised by 2050. Gas emission must be reduced and new renewable energy technologies

encouraged. Keller concluded that climate change is a process that has been developing for some time, adding that companies and their objectives must therefore adapt to its requirements and consequences.

**Miquel Alís Font** (Mayor of Encamp), **Juli Minoves** (Minister of the Principality of Andorra) and **Ventura Espot** (Mayor of Ordino) participated in the final session of the conference. **Alís** concluded that acknowledging the problems is a part of the solution and, thus, he is very satisfied by the achievement of this event. **Espot** added that Ordino has already begun preparations for the sixth conference and has committed to maintaining the level of excellence achieved in the fifth. Finally, **Juli Minoves** closed the conference, thanking all participants for their contributions to the discussion. “We are looking forward to seeing you in two years in Ordino”, were last words at the Fifth World Conference of Snow and Mountain Tourism.



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