

Report on the Activities of the International Hotel & Restaurant Association IH&RA to the NRA International Relations Committee

1. International Standards for Tourism Services - ISO (International Organisation for Standardization)

Ever since ISO set up a Technical Committee (TC 228) in early 2005 to develop international standards for tourism services IH&RA has lobbied hard for the exclusion of “accommodation & catering” from the scope of this Committee. This concerted effort has effectively brought the work of the TC to a virtual standstill.

However, at the 2nd TC annual meeting in Bangkok in February 2007, ISO confirmed that it will not formally exclude accommodation & catering from the TC’s scope but stated that the TC Business Plan “would comprise only those work items where there is known support amongst the stakeholders”.

On 14 February 2007, prior to the Bangkok meeting, **IH&RA President & Director-General met with ISO Secretary-General Alan Bryden in Geneva** to explain IH&RA’s position and explore ways out of this on-going deadlock. Alan Bryden said he understood the industry’s opposition to the establishment of an international hotel classification scheme and stressed that ISO would not proceed with work in areas that did not have the support of the industry involved. ISO SG also recognised that cultural diversity necessarily alters the implementation of any given service standard.

IH&RA has provided input on the Draft Business Plan of the TC as requested and will continue to monitor the process closely to ensure that there is agreement on what constitutes “less controversial areas”. Just what these will be has yet to be decided and this decision will be crucial.

2. Tri-Partite Meeting on the Global Food Chain – ILO (International Labour Organization)

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) will hold a major Tri-Partite meeting in Geneva (24-28 September 2007) on “The Global Food Chains”. These “Tri-Partite” meetings are so called because they involve representatives of governments, employees (trade unions) and employers (employer associations).

The meeting topic originally covered a very broad range of sectors: agriculture, food processing, food wholesale, food retail and catering/restaurants. In the light of criticism expressed by the Employer group, ILO has reviewed and narrowed the scope of the meeting, eliminating catering and restaurants. The title is now: **Employment in the Food & Drink Industries: The Challenge of Global Food Chains.**

As some of IH&RA’s major Foodservice Members source products from the major players involved in the meeting (eg Cargill, Nestlé, Kraft, Unilever, Coca Cola etc.) the topic remains of concern to them. For this reason, a representative of these Foodservice Members will be present in Geneva as part of the “Employer” Group and will be able to provide expertise as needed on the spot.

IH&RA has already circulated the preliminary draft of the ILO Report proposed for discussion at the meeting.

It is essential to obtain industry feedback on the draft report in order to shape the final document and stave off potentially unproductive negotiation at the meeting itself. The International Organization for Employers (IOE), our umbrella trade representation in Geneva, will coordinate the Employer Group at the meeting. IH&RA will continue to circulate discussion documents to its Members to ensure that the Employer Group is well prepared on all issues which may arise for debate.

3. Definition of “Food Advertising” – Codex Alimentarius/WHO

In 2004 the Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted a set of *Guidelines for the Use of Nutrition and Health Claims on Food*. Codex then requested its Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) “to consider the need for developing a **definition of advertising** as related to health and nutrition claims.” In response, the Canadian Government circulated a draft definition to which industry representatives strongly objected.

Working through the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) a number of major private sector players in the food service industry including IH&RA are lobbying **against the development of such a definition**.

The position of the industry group is that **there is no rationale for the development of an international definition of advertising as related to nutrition and health claims**.

In preparation for the forthcoming CCFL meeting in Ottawa (30 April - 4 May 2007), the Group is coordinating a communications campaign to reach out to national Codex delegations to CCFL. It has also drawn up its own definition of advertising for negotiating purposes.

4. Healthy Lifestyles – WHO (World Health Organization)

In November 2006, the WHO adopted the **WHO European Charter on Counteracting Obesity** designed to provide political guidance to WHO Member States. This Charter specifically refers to the need for “action to reduce marketing pressure, particularly on children”. As a result the Charter calls for regulatory measure to “substantially reduce the extent and impact of commercial promotion of energy-dense foods and beverages, particularly to children”. It also calls for the development of a “code on marketing to children in this area”.

During the Charter drafting phase IH&RA endorsed NRA’s letter to Markos Kyprianou, EU Health & Consumer Protection Commission, objecting to these recommendations. Further developments in this area cannot be separated from those on Food Advertising at the Codex Commission on Food Labelling (CCFL) – see above. IH&RA will follow this issue closely.

5. Skills Shortages & International Labour Mobility – IH&RA, ILO, IOM (International Organization for Migration), IOE (International Organisation for Employers)

A joint programme is being designed to create a process by which skilled and semi-skilled hotel and restaurant workers can migrate to areas of need under short and medium-term contracts. This would be during high-season periods or periods of unexpected unemployment (due to natural or man-made disasters). The purpose is for these workers to recover employment and gain international experience while earning competitive wages under internationally acceptable working conditions.

An additional objective is to gain international recognition for skills shortages and secure international involvement in addressing it.

The proposed project will address the following:

- collection and dissemination of information on skills shortages and skills availability via the Colombo Process website. (The Colombo Process, facilitated by IOM, is a series of Ministerial Consultations on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labour set up in 2003 between 11 sending and 8 receiving countries);
- collection and dissemination of information on recruitment and qualifications;
- An IOM pilot project financed under the EU Aeneas Programme could send 100 chefs from India and the Philippines to Europe with IH&RA involvement;

The IOM website for this project is already in beta stage and will include a section on IH&RA and its Members.

Also under discussion is the joint development of an IH&RA - IOM “Rapid Response Mechanism” for future crises such as natural disasters or political upheaval that leave skilled workers without employment (Tsunami, Lebanon war). This would enable vacancies & recruitment agency information to be posted on IOM website and a Worker Profile to be standardized.

6. Crisis & Risk Management & Prevention – IH&RA & UNEP (UN Environment Programme)

IH&RA was approached by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to partner in their application for a European Union grant offered under the Post-Tsunami Programme for Disaster Reduction in Tourism Destinations. This was awarded in August 2006.

The project is designed to improve the ability of coastal communities to deal with disaster by working with all tourism actors (including hotel and restaurant operators, local authorities, rescue agencies), to establish local mechanisms and processes for disaster preparedness and reduction.

The first series of UNEP APELL workshops has just been held in March with IH&RA participation in three Tsunami-hit communities in two different countries in Asia (Kanyakumari in India and Phuket and Phi Phi Island in Thailand).

The outcome will be an APELL “tool kit” for tourism destination will include awareness-raising materials, internationally agreed pictograms, training material for hospitality and tourism companies in the destinations, communication strategies and tools on crisis communication for use by hotel & restaurant operators. This will be produced on CD-Rom.

The next stage of the project will be a “Shelter Assessment” in the three pilot destinations. IH&RA will contribute technical expertise. The proposed “Security Guidelines for Hospitality Operators” currently under discussion within the IH&RA Global Council on Crisis & Risk Management will contribute very effectively to this APELL Kit.

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