

## Green Meetings<sup>1</sup> Part 1: Environmental Impacts of Meetings [For Whom the Bell Tolls]

### Setting the Scene: Environmental Impacts of Meetings/Events

Any perceptive parties concerned in the organizing of a meeting or any MICE event could unmistakably appreciate the fact that the monetary and environmental costs involved in such an undertaking.<sup>2</sup> Understandably, MICE events are, by their nature, considerably resource-intensive, and may potentially exert negative environmental impacts/consequences for the host locality and inhabitants. Accordingly, it is of utmost importance to comprehend the fundamental principles and reasons as to why one should adjust one's practices such that this becomes an integral component of one's planning and implementation processes at the micro level. Simultaneously, one also have to appreciate the more panoramic and comprehensive picture and an event's bearing/relation to current climate change and global warming.<sup>3</sup>

Climate change is a natural cycle whereby the earth and its atmosphere operate to accommodate the change in the amount of energy transmitted by the sun. The climate undergoes through warm and cold periods, with one complete cycle spanning centuries. Changes in temperature also influence rainfalls, but the biosphere is able to adapt to a changing climate if these changes take place naturally over hundreds of years. However, human intervention and anthropogenic factors are currently transforming the climatic pattern excessively rapidly – a phenomenon generally referred to as **global warming**. Plants and animals may not be able to adapt to this 'rapid' climate change as quickly as humans. As such, the entire ecosystem is inevitably and literally endangered. Such GHGs as methane and CO<sub>2</sub>, occur naturally in the atmosphere, trapping heat that would otherwise exit into the outer space, very much in the same vein as a gigantic blanket around the earth, or the glass roof of a greenhouse. Scientists have postulated that a number of anthropogenic activities are making this atmospheric blanket 'thicker',

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<sup>1</sup> Parallel to the notion of green meetings, a similar conceptualization has been developed to the same effect in other areas involving human assemblies such as event greening. See for example Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, First Edition, June 2010,

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings>

<sup>3</sup> The City of Cape Town, Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, pp. 1 and 19, *ibid*.

and, by adding excessive amounts of GHGs to the atmosphere, contributing significantly to climate change and global warming.<sup>4</sup>

Global warming/warming of the earth's climate system as a global phenomenon is unequivocal across the board.<sup>5</sup> Researchers are practically certain with statistically proven high levels of confidence that it is caused in the main by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases produced through anthropogenic activities such as deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels.<sup>6</sup> Warming would be associated with the continuing retreat of glaciers, permafrost and sea ice. Other likely effects of the warming include a more frequent occurrence of extreme-weather events such as ocean acidification heat waves, heavy rainfall and droughts, and species extinctions caused by shifting temperature regimes. Major effects affecting human beings include the loss of habitat from inundation/flooding and the threat to food security from decreasing crop yields.<sup>7</sup>

Policy responses to the warming of the earth's climate system include mitigation by 1) emissions reduction , 2) adaptation to its effects, and 3) possible/potential future geo-engineering. Signatories/parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC] have adopted a variety of policy options to mitigate/minimize greenhouse gas emissions<sup>9</sup> as well as to provide assistance in adaptation to this global climatic

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<sup>4</sup> See The City of Cape Town, Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, p. 20, *ibid*. Since the early 20th century, Earth's mean surface temperature has increased by approximately 0.8 °C (1.4 °F), with about two-thirds of the increase occurring since 1980, see *America's Climate Choices*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press. 2011. p. 15. ISBN 978-0-309-14585-5: "The average temperature of the Earth's surface increased by about 1.4 °F (0.8 °C) over the past 100 years, with about 1.0 °F (0.6 °C) of this warming occurring over just the past three decades." [quoted in Wikipedia, Global Warming, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_warming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming)].

<sup>5</sup> "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level." IPCC, *Synthesis Report*, Section 1.1: Observations of climate change, in IPCC AR4 SYR 2007 [quoted in Wikipedia, Global Warming, *ibid*].

<sup>6</sup> See Joint science academies' statement: Global response to climate change, <http://nationalacademies.org/onpi/06072005.pdf>, IPCC, *Synthesis Report*, Section 2.4: Attribution of climate change, in IPCC AR4 SYR 2007 [quoted in Wikipedia, Global Warming, *ibid*., and *America's Climate Choices*: Panel on Advancing the Science of Climate Change; National Research Council (2010). *Advancing the Science of Climate Change*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press. ISBN 0-309-14588-0: "... there is a strong, credible body of evidence, based on multiple lines of research, documenting that climate is changing and that these changes are in large part caused by human activities ...." (p.1). "Some scientific conclusions or theories have been so thoroughly examined and tested, .... This is the case for the conclusions that the Earth system is warming and that much of this warming is very likely due to human activities" (p. 21-22) Citations quoted in Wikipedia, Global Warming, *ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Various climate model projections summarized in the 2007 *Fourth Assessment Report* (AR4) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicated that during the 21st century the global surface temperature would rise by between 1.1 to 2.9 °C (2 to 5.2 °F) and 2.4 to 6.4 °C (4.3 to 11.5 °F) for their highest. For further information, see the 2007 Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) and Wikipedia, Global Warming, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_warming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming)

phenomenon. Parties to the UNFCCC have agreed that effective reductions in emissions are required, and that future global warming should be limited to below 2.0 °C (3.6 °F) relative to the pre-industrial level.<sup>8</sup>

## The MICE Sector's Involvement and Responsibility

Thousands of major events organized globally per year. As such, the MICE sector should contemplate logically upon its substantial impacts on the physical environment. In particular, large multinational/international event may potentially have significant impacts on the socio-economic and environmental conditions of host localities [at all levels]. Naturally, the sheer staggering number of these events, when taken together, is most likely to have negative bearings on the environment if not administered properly, especially with special reference to the utilization of such basic-yet-major natural resources as energy and water. MICE events also create waste in large quantities, and contribute significantly to air pollution and various forms of carbon footprints.<sup>9</sup>

## Champion of the Cause

Things put in perspective, this state of affairs is not necessarily always a sorry saga. For one thing, economic growth, growth in the MICE sector, in the main, contains positive elements – very much in the same vain as any growth factor – in the economic equation, with additional employments created and higher remuneration schemes. That is one apparent side of the coin. The question raised immediately is how would one cope with the negative externalities on the other side of the same coin? Would it not be a case that growth unleashed in an unrestrained manner could produce a reverse result as forceful or even destructive to the same degree as the blessing? Would an interpretation of this scenario as a subdued curse in disguise a justifiable move? That concern articulated and shared ... fair enough. Nevertheless, truth be told [literally], a great number of people – slightly short of Maverick – still firmly believe that together we can preserve or change as appropriate to strike out a satisfactory outcome.

In a nutshell, we should, at least, be able to minimize negative externalities/spin-off effects of MICE activities if we could not, on our own, initiate any shift in the mainstream technological paradigms to safeguard the world at all. As such even with this minimalist aspiration, if we could strike a balance whereby the two sides of the same coins – productivity, efficiency, growth, economic remuneration and positive information-sharing and brain-storming on the one hand and minimization of negative externalities in the form of carbon footprint generation and others on the other hand are constructively and concretely – are taken into consideration in an socio-economic and

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<sup>8</sup> Global Warming, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_warming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming), *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> The City of Cape Town, Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, First Edition, June 2010, p. 22, *ibid*

environmental equation, in all probabilities, the eventual outcome would be no less than acceptable at the very least.

The way in which MICE events are carried out can potentially and effectively minimize their negative impacts on the environment, and also enhance their positive results/outcome to a greater extent. It is an integral part of the MICE sector's collective responsibility/accountability scheme to contemplate/deliberate upon ways in which meetings/events may be implemented in a manner which is environmentally sustainable and financially viable manner to better addresses **the triple bottom-line**. All parties concerned – clients, delegates and exhibitors, office staff members, suppliers/sub-contractors – shall have to be better informed regarding the concrete significance of MICE event greening, and what is duly expected of and required from them. It has been generally recognized that the MICE sector has tremendous potential to initiate and effectively bring about change/transformation by advocating and adopting a comprehensive organizational culture of **corporate social responsibility** and eco-sustainable consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

At the global level, an increasing number of events are hosted in an economically, socially, and environmentally responsible/accountable manner. Many international clients are making **green meetings/event greening** a part of their tender process. Greening events are capable of not only reducing negative environmental impacts, but also leave a constructive and lasting legacy for the host community.<sup>11</sup>

At present, parts of the tourism and convention industry promote green convention, meetings, and conferences planning as a response to the increasing demand for sustainability measures and practices. Industry associations/entities have produced guidelines and standards for as well as reports on green meetings/green events. Public agencies and non-profit organizations also promote these practices based on technical support, research, recommendations, and funding. Some private consultants in the event planning sector specialize in mounting green events, and industry groups, while governments currently sponsor awards to honor/recognize remarkable contributions and achievements. Green conventions, meetings, conferencing and events are part of an ever-growing international movement to achieve a sustainable global economy and livable planet<sup>12</sup> as a whole: i.e. entities and programs across the world have taken shape and sprung up in this spirit, and more than ever, they have consistently forge ahead and converged in their objectives and goals very much in a way the French would described as "*esprit de corps*" in this bid. Notable players at the international level include:

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<sup>10</sup> See The City of Cape Town, Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, First Edition, June 2010, p. 22, *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> See The City of Cape Town, Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, First Edition, June 2010, pp. 3-4, *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_conventions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_conventions)

1. **The US Environmental Protection Agency [EPA]:** In order to incorporate the notion of green purchasing into more public settings, the EPA's EPP Program has worked in support of the Oceans Blue Foundation in the development of an online Green Meetings Tool. The tool offers hosts, planners and suppliers ways to embrace green principles into every component and aspect of meeting and conference planning. Starting with 10 Easy Tips to greening meetings, the tool takes users step by step through every element of the planning process from location and major venue selection, to transportation, and food and beverage options, etc. The tool also includes success stories, the opportunity to receive an e-newsletter and a calculator for gauging how green a meeting is through an interactive quiz that informs users how their choices achieve the "greenness" of their MICE activities. The online apparatus offers users a broad list of other links and resources. The goal of this online tool is to allow users access to a comprehensive pool of resources to save costs, time and the environment.<sup>13</sup>
2. **The Green Meeting Industry Council [GMIC]:** GMIC is a major international source of knowledge and expertise on sustainability in the meetings, incentives, events and conference sector. GMIC helps its members and the sector as a whole to comprehend and achieve the benefits of sustainable/best practices by enhancing the environmental performance, business impact and social value of their MICE events. The Council comprises individual members and supporting businesses seeking to transform the MICE sector to support the concept of green meetings/event greening.<sup>14</sup>

GMIC provides: **education** [to inspire and motivate meeting professionals to action to address sustainability by developing and providing resources that enable adoption of green meeting practices]; **community** [to bring planners and suppliers together to create green meetings by providing networking and information sharing, including an annual conference]; **recognition** [to increase the profile of innovators in the green meetings field through awards and media coverage]; **control** [to standardize sustainable meeting practice by providing a certified qualification for green meeting professionals]; and **research and policy** [to provide credible and relevant data, expertise and policy to assist professionals in making informed and intelligent decisions]. In addition to the Green Meeting Industry Council (GMIC) web site, the GMIC also

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/pubs/basic.html>

<sup>14</sup> In its own words, "The Green Meeting Industry Council (GMIC) is the premier global community solely dedicated to sustainability in the meetings and events industry, not only through education but also by spearheading research, policy and standards. GMIC is a nonprofit professional meetings association with member representation in over 20 countries. The GMIC is 100% focused on advancing sustainability in the meetings industry, helping leaders of all levels." [see <http://www.gmicglobal.org>].

hosts Bluegreen Meetings as a free resource site for meeting industry practitioners, providing tips and information about how to start greening their meetings.<sup>15</sup>

3. **International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus (IACVB):** Founded in 1914, The IACVB is dedicated to sustainable tourism, and represents more than 1,100 professional members from over 480 bureaus in 30 countries. The association promotes sound professional practices in the solicitation and servicing of meetings and conventions. IACVB's member bureaus represent travel/tourism-related businesses at the local and regional level. They also serve as the primary contact point for a broad universe of convention, meeting, and tour practitioners.<sup>16</sup>
4. **Meeting Professionals International (MPI):** MPI, a Dallas-based global meetings industry community, provides innovative knowledge and learning experiences for over 22,000 members across the world, connecting people and ideas and creating market potential and opportunities. Since its foundation year in 1972, MPI delivers global human connections through its 71 chapters and clubs in 20 countries globally. MPI is committed to reducing the environmental and climate impact of meetings worldwide. Recycling, reducing paper waste and forging environmentally-conscious business partnerships feature among the measures MPI is engaged along a greener path. In addition, MPI continues to elevate the dialogue among its global community regarding sustainability and corporate social responsibility by slating these vital topics in professional education conferences and events as well as insightful blogs on the Meeting Professionals International Web site.<sup>17</sup>

Simultaneously and spontaneously, business players across the world have also joined this positive environmental bandwagon. Examples under this heading include:

1. **Conference Venues Southern Africa [CONVEN]:** CONVEN provides quick and easy access to a wide array of venues across southern Africa. Convention venues featured on its website range from the finest hotels and conference centers in South Africa to out-of-the-way places to visit. Diverse venues are offered to suit all budget categories from high-profile affairs to intimate team-building get together events. Venues featured include all South African provinces – Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga,

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/pubs/initiatives.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.iacvb.org>, and <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/pubs/initiatives.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.mpiweb.org/Home>, Meeting Professionals International (MPI), 2112 Annual Business Barometer, p. 19, and <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/pubs/initiatives.html>

KwaZulu-Natal, North West Province, Limpopo, as well as Free State. Additionally, the company feature some resorts and hotels in Swaziland and Zambia.<sup>18</sup>

2. **CVENT** [Online Solutions for Events and Surveys]: Founded in 1999, CVENT the world's largest meetings and event management technology and company, and has over 1,000 employees worldwide. CVENT offers web-based software for meeting site selection, online event registration, event management, e-mail marketing, as well as web surveys. The company works with over 150,000 users in 100 countries, manage hundreds of thousands of events, surveys and e-mail campaigns.<sup>19</sup>

## Definition of Green Meetings

A variety of definitions of green meetings have been postulated to shed light on this concept. In this paper only three definitions are presented for the reader to refer to and consider as a frame of reference during our discussion.

- 1) According to the Convention Industry Council, green meetings refers to activities that “Incorporate environmental considerations throughout all stages of the meeting process in order to minimize the negative impact on the environment and make a positive impact to host communities in terms of environmental and social legacies.”<sup>20</sup>
- 2) Green conventions or green meetings are conventions which are conducted in ways which minimize the environmental burdens imposed by such activities. Green event planners apply environmentally preferred practices to waste management, resource and energy use, travel and local transportation, facilities selection, siting and construction, food provision and disposal, hotels and accommodations, and management and purchasing decisions. The practice is known as "event greening" or "sustainable event management".<sup>21</sup>
- 3) **Phutiratana**, in his paper entitled “Externalities Galore in Conferences” has formalized the scope of this notion further and has postulated that a green meeting refers to a meeting that is specifically designed and implemented in optimal ways to minimize its environmental impacts and/or externalities in order to achieve sustainability throughout all of its components and involves all parties concerned in the meeting realization process (approx. 10.02-10.08 hrs. and 10.31 hrs.).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.conven.co.za/about-us>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.cvent.com/en/event-management-software/green-meetings-made-easy.shtml>

<sup>20</sup> [quoted in Green Meetings Thailand, <http://www.greenmeetingsthailand.com>].

<sup>21</sup> ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_conventions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_conventions): accessed approx 12.15 hrs. 23 Feb 13)

<sup>22</sup> Charungkiat Phutiratana, Externalities Galore in Conferences, Conference Interpretation, Unpublished Lecture Notes Series, 2012

Meanwhile the Smart Events Handbook provides a definition of the event greening concept, which is similar to the notion of green meetings. According to this handbook, event greening is “the process of incorporating socially and environmentally responsible decision making into the planning, organization and implementation of, and participation in, an event. It involves including sustainable development principles and practices in all levels of event organization, and aims to ensure that an event is hosted responsibly. It represents the total package of interventions at an event, and needs to be done in an integrated manner. Event greening should start at the inception of the project, and should involve all the key role players, such as clients, organizers, venues, sub-contractors and suppliers.”<sup>23</sup>

## Green meetings and Corporate Social Responsibility [CSR]

Green meetings and CSR are closely related and are two complementary concepts. However, they are by no means one and the same thing. The practice of the green meetings, at any rate, within an organization is only suggestive of the CSR philosophy being observed there, to begin with. It is to be noted that operating a good event greening/green meetings program requires specifically efficient administrative and support components as such. To be sure again, even when a successful event greening/green meetings program does exist anywhere, this does not necessarily CSR has successfully or comprehensively taken shape within that particular organization.

## Constructive Contributions/Benefits of Green Meetings/Event Greening

What follows is an initial list composed of two-tier components: 1) **macro-level benefits** and 2) **micro-level benefits**. Each of these two tiers are further sub-divided in to 4 major constructive contributions/benefits for the event organizers, delegates, service suppliers / subcontractors and the host economy /community to deliberate upon cautiously. It is to be noted, however, that list is by no means exhaustive:

### 1. **Macro-level/society-level benefits**

- 1.1) **Social benefits:** A MICE event planned and hosted properly could benefit the host economy/community through creating employment opportunities, selecting local suppliers/subcontractors, promoting better working conditions, and serving as an effective catalyst for social improvement.

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<sup>23</sup> Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, p. 3, *ibid*

- 1.2) **Enhancing and Influencing the social decision-making process:** By collectively establishing and sharing standards, and introducing new sets of norms as well as individuals' behaviors, other entities/organizations could also be motivated to adopt social and environmental adjustments/improvements in their MICE events.
- 1.3) **Awareness raising among constituents concerned:** All MICE events present a unique opportunity for all parties concerned to raise awareness within the constituent community comprising delegates, staff members, goods and service suppliers/subcontractors and the host economy in relation to the benefits of sustainable livelihood/living, and enhances environmental best practice in the locality.
- 1.4) **Concrete environmental innovation:** Event greening substantially advocates and concretely promotes innovative technical and technological developments, which, in their turn, gives rise to a more efficient use of natural, human and financial resources.

## 2. Micro-level/firm-level benefits

- 2.1) **Physical cost savings:** Minimizing resulting waste, purchasing regional / indigenous goods and services, conserving resources and energy, as well as consuming less effectively mean substantial costs are saved proportionately.
- 2.2) **Goodwill/positive reputation:** A green meeting/event is a highly visible demonstration of one's organization's/entity's reflected commitment and responsibility vis-à-vis eco-sustainability, and one's support of global best practices/actions against the negative effect of the warming of the climatic system.
- 2.3) **Strategic Business Opportunities;** Developing and operating green meetings / event greening policy offers business opportunities in terms of public relations, quality personnel recruitment, customer loyalty as well as business strategic alliance networking.
- 2.4) **Return on Financial investment [ROI]:** As mentioned in 2.1 and 2.3, by pursuing greening, individuals and organizations will be able to both minimize physical costs and increase strategic business opportunities. This will, in turn, significantly enhance their business ROI.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Charungkiat Phutiratana, Green Meetings and Event Greening, Conference Interpretation, Unpublished Lecture Notes Series, 2011. Also, see Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, pp.1, and 19-20, *ibid*. It is to be noted that an event hosted in a 'green' manner may be expected to potentially produce the following outcomes/results: 1) 2) to reduce its negative environmental impacts, such as its effects/impacts on biodiversity, carbon emissions, and waste to landfill, 2) to improve its resource efficiency of the supply chain

## A Comprehensive Checklist for a Better and Greener Meeting/MICE Event

Certain practical practices have been identified to promote/implement green meetings and event greening.<sup>25</sup>

### 1. Planning process

One needs planning in order to organize an event in a green manner: 1) start early and get a working team together to drive it; 2) compile an action/operational plan detailing responsibilities and timelines; 3) acquire buy-in and support from, *inter alia*, clients, goods and service suppliers/sub-contractors, and venues; 4) communicate the plans to clients, delegates, participants, exhibitors, members of the press, and other parties cornered; and 5) provide staff training on green meetings/event greening practices; and 6) monitor progress and evaluate success.

### 2. Office

1) Ensure that all staff members know about the environmental policy; 2) Purchase products that are environmentally friendly with a high recycled content; 3) Minimize paper use – keep all correspondence electronic; 4) Print double sided and use small margins – consider printing two pages per sheet; 5) Use a multi-bin system for recycling and get staff involved in the process; 6) Use refillable ink cartridges for printing; 7) Arrange water coolers or fresh water instead of bottled water; 8) Encourage staff to switch off lights; and 9) Plan staff shifts according to available bus and train schedules

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management and the entire MICE event and; 3) to increase its economic, social and environmental benefits (triple bottom-line); 4) to enhance its socio-economic impacts, such as local investment, employment opportunities, and long-term viability; 5) to strengthen its social impact, such as fair employment and community involvement; 6) to improve its sustainable performance within an available budget; 7) to present opportunities for more efficient planning and use of equipment and infrastructure; 8) to reduce its negative impacts/effects on the local population; 9) to protect the local biodiversity as well as water and soil resources; 10) to apply the principles of eco-procurement of goods and services; 11) to raise awareness of sustainability imperatives/issues among all parties concerned; and 12) to ensure that the aims and objectives are clearly defined, measured, and accounted for. See Charungkiat Phutiratana, Green Meetings and Event Greening, Conference Interpretation, Unpublished Lecture Notes Series, 2011, and Charungkiat Phutiratana, Externalities Galore in Conferences, Conference Interpretation, Unpublished Lecture Notes Series, 2011. Also, see The City of Cape Town, Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, pp. 3-4, *ibid*.

<sup>25</sup> See The City of Cape Town, Smart Events Handbook: Greening guidelines for hosting sustainable events in Cape Town, pp. 23-24 *ibid*. Also see Charungkiat Phutiratana, Green Meetings and Event Greening, Conference Interpretation, Unpublished Lecture Notes Series, 2011. For comparison purposes, see 10 Simple ways to green your meeting, see <http://www.conven.co.za/latest-news-on-the-conference-meetings-and-events-industries/item/330-environmental-responsibility-and-greening-your-meetings-and-events>.

### 3. **Eco-Procurement Scheme**

Procurement of goods and services exerts a substantial influence on event greening: 1) prioritize/give preference to local goods and services; 2) prioritize/give preference to environmentally friendly products or services; 3) deliberate upon ways to reduce, re-use, and recycles [3Rs] in the procurement process; 4) avoid the use of single-use disposable products; 5) promote the use of 3Rs products or that contain recycled components; and 6) avoid excessively packaged products and buy in large quantities as appropriate

### 4. **Venues**

Discuss a greening plan when visiting the MICE venue. When selecting the venue, always verify the following points: 1) are they within a safe walking distance from suitable accommodation, local shops, recreational areas, etc?; 2) is natural lighting provided?; 3) are all the access areas fitted with energy-efficient lighting facilities?; 4) is air-conditioning kept to a minimum and set pursuant to seasonal requirements?; 5) is back-up generators run on eco-friendly fuel?; 6) is waste separation provided [at appropriate points]?; and 7) is the possible negative impact kept to a minimum when organizing open-air MICE events.

### 5. **Meetings and MICE Events**

All parties concerned have a role to play to ensure that greening is implemented at an exhibition: 1) ensure that the 'green' message is clear and simple in the exhibitor manual; 2) ensure that banners and signs are generic whenever possible; and 3) ensure that inserts into visitor bags are kept to a minimum. In parallel, the venue should: 1) ensure that their staff members are adequately trained and understand the greening plans; 2) implement a multi-bin waste system in the exhibition area to encourage recycling; and 3) provide 50% lighting during the set-up stage. Simultaneously, exhibitors at the event should be encouraged to: 1) choose decorations and display materials that can be reused; 2) be innovative with their exhibition designs and use 3Rs materials; 3) provide electronic communication instead of printed hand-outs; and 4) keep their packaging material and re-use it at the end of the event.

### 6. **Registrations**

During the registration process, 1) provide electronic registrations and correspondence; 2) advise participants regarding 'eco-friendly behavior'/'green behavior' before and during the event; and 3) encourage participants/delegates to return their badges/lanyards for re-use.

### 7. **Audio-visual and other equipment items**

Always make efforts to reduce carbon footprint by: 1) using equipment with energy efficient rating; 2) switching off all unnecessary equipment overnight; 3) using notebooks/i-pads and other equivalents

portable devices instead of desktops due to their greater energy efficiency; and 4) disposing of old cartridges.

## 8. **Accommodation**

Regarding accommodation 1) ensure that it is located near the MICE event venue[s]; 2) provide energy efficient lighting and natural lighting as appropriate; 3) inform their guests regarding their environmental policies and initiatives 4) operate a 3Rs program for main waste; 5) provide guests with a key card linked to the lights and air-conditioning in the rooms; 6) operate a registration and billing process; 7) clearly display, operate, and encourage a towel and bed sheet re-use policy; 8) provide soap and shampoo provisions in refillable dispensers; and 9) provide environmental training for their staff and goods and service provider.

## 9. **Transportation arrangements**

In order to find innovative transport options: 1) provide group airport transfers instead of individual transfers; 2) use cycle-cabs in central urban areas; 3) encourage incentives for car-pooling such as free parking; 4) facilitate and encourage walking options by creating safe walking routes connecting the accommodation and venue; 5) ensure that drivers provide fuel-efficient driving; and 6) ensure that the parking areas do not damage the natural environment

## 10. **Catering and beverages**

Catering during MICE events has a significant impact on the environment. One may minimize this impact by: 1) selecting local, organic and seasonal food ingredients; 2) requesting SASSI fish and avoiding meat where appropriate; 3) providing healthy items during breaks; 4) taking into consideration the food miles in food preparation; 5) in order minimize food wastage, trying to establish the exact amount of delegates/participants; 6) providing tap drinking water rather than bottled water; 7) printing menus on 3Rs/eco-friendly paper or digitally; and 8) ensuring that the run-off water is channeled to appropriate points and disposed of in a responsible manner.

## 11. **Marketing, PR and material production**

Eco-friendly components in this regard include: 1) avoiding glossy/colorful publications. Instead, print on paper with recycled content and request vegetable or soya based ink for printing when possible; 2) avoiding printing by providing information electronically such as on a CD or USB stick; 3) choosing useful, eco-friendly and durable presents from local providers; 4) distributing production of banners that cannot be re-used to small businesses; and 5) considering an electronic marketing campaigns regarding greening initiatives.

## 12. Décor materials

For décor purposes, 1) use innovative materials for partitioning and furniture; 2) use energy-efficient lights; 3) instead of wax candles, use soya candles; and 4) when fixing marquees ensure that the natural environment is not affected nor damaged; and 5) avoid the use of products related to cruelty against animals.

## 13. Recreational arrangements

For recreational purposes 1) give preference to local performers; 2) engage performers in the green conceptualization process for further stage reflections during the performance; and 3) use the recreational activity as an audience-friendly way to communicate the eco-friendly message to all the parties concerned. This can be achieved in a subtle or straightforward fashion as appropriate.

## Salient Features of Green Meetings/Conventions

**Phutiratana** has summarized **11 salient stylized features and concepts** of green meetings/conventions as follows:

- 1) Green meetings represent a shift in a perception/thinking paradigm in MICE practices in response to ever-growing environmental impacts of the MICE sector;
- 2) This is because CSR, as a concept, is relatively vast and has a variety of aspects to it. Green meeting practices are pinned upon the combined application of specific technological advances and human collective action to achieve environmental and entrepreneurial efficiency;
- 3) The human component of green meetings is comprised of at least quadripartite subgroups rather than simply involves industrial players: i.e. 1) MICE hosts and participants; 2) MICE practitioners; 3) the government; and 4) international regional and local entities such as associations concerned and environmentally concerned agencies;
- 4) In the current age characterized by combined forces of globalization and localization, the concept of green meetings requires contributions and participation on the part of both international and local players in order to be comprehensive and pervasive. No single economy, entity, or player, however powerful and efficient it may appear or be could possibly and solely cope with the overarching environmental exigency of the MICE sector;

- 5) The concept of green meetings itself is an area of ever-expanding business activities worldwide. This trend continues to grow as environmental impacts of human activities as a whole and MICE activities in particular are becoming more pronounced;<sup>26</sup>
- 6) Technological requirements involved in the administration and rendering of green meetings do not necessarily and solely involve cutting-edge, state-of-the-arts technology in the narrow sense of the word although any such technological initiatives could well be a welcome move where appropriate.<sup>27</sup> In the main, standard modern-technology facilities adequately cater for the needs of the MICE sector industry. Therefore, the application of telecommunications system such as reliable and efficient e-mail, internet access, and teleconferencing are applicable in such steps as marketing and rendering processes.<sup>28</sup> It is the meticulous planning and well-crafted application of common modern technologies of good quality across all aspects of green meetings, rather than simply the sheer use of the most recent frontier that carries more weight in the industry;
- 7) Time-honored best practices and innovative initiatives are equally important. While, proven practices are generally recognized standard practices in the MICE sector which may be replicated (sometimes with adjustments as appropriate), innovative initiatives are a modus operandi through which room for improvement is actually effected;

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<sup>26</sup> For example, in terms of its business turnover, CVENT has processed over \$2 billion in online payments and has managed over 30 million event registrations and survey responses for its clients. A leading authority on Strategic Meetings Management (SMM), CVENT's technology has been used to implement SMM programs around the world. See <http://www.cvent.com/en/event-management-software/green-meetings-made-easy.shtml>.

<sup>27</sup> It has been pointed by MPI that meeting professionals are not complaining about the raft of new products, but are struggling to become acquainted with them as quickly as they are introduced [MPI, 2012 Business Barometer Annual, p.2].

<sup>28</sup> However, it is interesting to note one point: a research project has shown that **meeting planners and suppliers have differing technological needs**. For meeting practitioners/professionals, the most important technologies promote "**better access to the Internet at venues and hotels**" and "**better feedback from attendees about the meeting experience**." A substantial increase in technological availability has improved/enriched their work and the meeting experience. Nevertheless, this increase has certainly culminated in confusion as to which solutions/tools and products to utilize. Meeting practitioners/professionals are challenged to select and implement solutions as well as predict the outcomes of applying/employing a variety of new technological options available. In the meantime, organizations anticipating the greatest increase in meeting-generated revenue [i.e. planners and suppliers] are the very least interested in solutions providing alternatives to live meetings. Firms having the highest percentage of **revenue generating events** are most interested in technologies that provide "better feedback from participants regarding the MICE meeting experience," "improve identification and tracking at MICE events," "social networking tools to supplement events," "co-create/customize products and services with meeting attendees" and "improve payment systems for expense tracking purposes." Demand and availability were similar in all the regions studied [see MPI, Meeting Professionals International (MPI), 2112 Annual Business Barometer, p. 10].

- 8) Innovation is an area in which both large-scale MICE enterprises and SME players enjoy a level playing field, whereby constituents in both categories are free to innovate ways to improve their efficiency and social value for the purposes of realizing green meetings;<sup>29</sup>
- 9) In all probabilities the notion and rendering of green meetings are likely to grow in practice as the world economy and the world population expands in tandem with the deteriorating environmental conditions. In actual fact, even **“meetings on green meetings”** and logistics themselves are also more likely to take center stage in the wake of an environmentally conscious world;
- 10) The green meetings logistics and suppliers sub-sectors serving the green meeting concept have taken shape firmly and continue to grow along the line with the positive **“green meeting bandwagon”**.<sup>30</sup>

‘Green meetings’ as a global concept and practice has been growing and is expected to take on more aspects as time goes by as the current environmental plight deteriorate. However, for it to become full-fledged, further studies, comparative research involving regional and global entities, and advocacy are duly required. With the passage of time and greater understanding, this concept will potentially become even stronger and more concrete. Still, in actual it is not far-fetched to argue that it may even take decades or even a generation for this concept to be comprehensively and practically global and concrete reality, which is very much in the same as any socio-economic issues.

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<sup>29</sup> This is the main area of focus in part 2 of this paper which is due to appear in our next issue.

<sup>30</sup> Taken together, salient stylized facts no.9 and no.10 depicts the existence of threefold green meeting entities: i.e. 1) green meetings as a concept and practice; 2) meetings on green meetings; and green meeting suppliers and logistics sub-sector.

## Conclusions

In this paper, we have laid down the outlays and state of affairs of the MICE sector with regards to its environmental impacts. Apparently, this sent a silent-yet-chilling message across the industry in light of the current climate change. The notion of green meetings has been heralded as a legitimate champion of the cause in the nick of time. It is high time we in the growing, sunrise service sector, as a collective whole, redress this scenario. In the forthcoming issue, we shall indentify and share powerful solutions and initiatives as well as delve into some practical and concrete case studies from both home and far-away lands that may be applied to flagship enterprises, and SME operators alike.

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