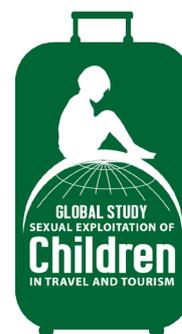


EXPERT PAPER



# COSTA RICA: A SUSTAINABLE TOURIST DESTINATION COMMITTED TO PROTECT CHILDREN

MAURICIO VENTURA ARAGÓN  
MINISTRO DE TURISMO DE COSTA RICA

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## INTRODUCTION

Costa Rica, a small territory located in the heart of the American continent, has become a tangible example of tourism synonymous with progress, well-being, socioeconomic growth, environmental stewardship and an ideal platform for the promotion of cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the tourism industry has expressed its explicit commitment to ensure the protection of children to combat the scourge of commercial sexual exploitation of this vulnerable population, associated with travel and tourism.

To do this, the Costa Rican tourism sector has committed to implement the Code of Conduct, a joint initiative among the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the private sector and ECPAT International, a network of 90 member groups in 82 countries around the world which fights to end the sexual exploitation of children.

This important instrument is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Costa Rica in 1990; the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, ratified by Costa Rica in 2001; the 1996 Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children; the 2001 UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the 2001 Yokohama Declaration.



In the same way, the Code of Conduct promotes compliance with the legal instruments that serve to guarantee protection of the rights of Costa Rica's children.

Currently, almost 400 tourism companies have adhered to the Code of Conduct, by committing to establish the necessary measures to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation associated with travel and tourism.

This commitment entails a policy of zero tolerance, the training of employees, the procedures for suppliers, the placing of external symbols in visible places, as well as the presentation of an annual report reflecting the degree of compliance with the commitments made.

Additionally, thanks to the Code of Conduct, around 5000 tourism sector employees from the hotel industry, travel agencies, airlines, cruise ship companies, taxi services and car rental companies, among other tourism operators, have been trained.

Coupled with these actions, diverse campaigns have been carried out at the national level to inform tourists about the sexual exploitation of children and its illegality in Costa Rica.

Similarly, at the end of 2015, a virtual campaign was launched entitled "Unforgettable Costa Rica," the purpose of which was to directly confront Internet users who look for information about Costa Rica as a destination to sexually exploit children through the website [www.unforgettablecostarica.com](http://www.unforgettablecostarica.com).

Thanks to the country's commitment, tourism is shown to be more than simply an activity that revitalises the economy, but also a sustainable industry which can protect the rights of children, because this social role is a priority to ensure the positive positioning of the country as a tourist destination.

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Minister of Tourism Costa Rica