No. NT-1401/2/2021
Government of India
Ministry of Tourism
(Niche Tourism Division)

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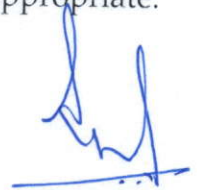
Dated: 29th April 2022

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: **National Strategy for Eco Tourism**

The Ministry of Tourism has formulated a **National Strategy for Eco Tourism.** A copy of the Strategy is enclosed for ready reference and further action, as appropriate.

2.   This issues with the approval of Competent Authority.

(Sanjay Singh)
Deputy Director General

To

Secretaries of all Ministries/Departments, Government of India

Copy for information and necessary action along with a copy of the Strategy document to:-

Principal Secretaries/Secretaries/Commissioner (Tourism), all State Governments/ UT Administrations
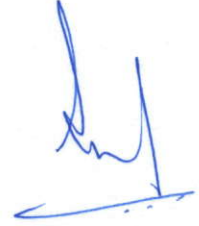
Copy for information and necessary action along with a copy of the Strategy document to:-

UNEP (India) / FICCI / CII / RTSOI / FAITH / IATO / ADTOI / TAAI / ATAOI

Copy for information to:-

1. PS to HM(T) / PS to MoS (SYN) / PS to MoS (AB)
2. PS to Secretary (T)
3. PS to DG (T) / PS to AS (T) /
4. PS to ADG (T) / PS to EA (T) / PS to ADG (MR)
5. All Regional Directors, Ministry of Tourism

(Sanjay Singh)
Deputy Director General

National Strategy

for

Ecotourism

29th April, 2022

Ministry of Tourism
Government of India

National Strategy and Roadmap
for
Ecotourism

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. India's unrivalled natural attractions

The natural attractions in India are almost unrivalled in the world, ranging from pristine forests, snow-clad Himalayas, montane grasslands, golden and silver deserts, rivers, lakes, wetlands, mangroves, beaches, volcanoes and corals, housing tremendous biodiversity. Besides, we have the mega-fauna consisting of iconic species such as tigers, lions, elephants, rhinos, leopards, wild buffaloes, Indian bison (gaur), etc. and more than 1200 species of birds.

1.2. India's rich natural and eco-tourism resources

India has significant geographical advantage owing to its rich natural & eco-tourism resources:

- 70 per cent of the Himalayas
- 7,000 kms of coastline
- Among the one of the three countries in the world with both hot and cold deserts
- Ranks 10th in total area under forest cover
- Ranks 6th in terms of number of recognized UNESCO Natural Heritage sites

1.3. Ecotourism – a tool for conservation of natural heritage

1.3.1. Eco tourism is now globally recognised as a powerful tool for conservation of forests, biodiversity/ wildlife and scenic landscapes. It does so by creating sustainable alternative livelihoods for forest dependent communities and by generating conservation awareness among masses and decision makers.

1.3.2. In order to strengthen community control and management of the forests, it is important to generate a sustainable flow of non-extractive financial benefits of forests for the communities, to ensure that the communities take interest in the conservation of forests and wildlife. Ecotourism is perhaps the only means of achieving this end.

1.3.3. Apart from its conservation and economic value, public interest in nature-based recreation, i.e. ecotourism is fast increasing, and it is the duty of the government to provide this service to the public as far as compatible with conservation imperatives. Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the travel and tourism industry which is one of the highest producers of global wealth and employment.

1.4. National Strategy on Sustainable Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism has also drafted national strategy on Sustainable tourism which focuses promoting environmental sustainability, protecting biodiversity, promoting economic sustainability and promoting socio-cultural sustainability. The strategy aims to mainstream sustainability into tourism sector. Ecotourism and Adventure tourism are the important segments to promote sustainable tourism.

1.5. Ecotourism guidelines by MoFECC

In order to regulate and encourage planned development of areas in and around protected areas, the Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change has recently notified "Ecotourism guidelines in and around protected areas 2021". These guidelines are based on the key recommendations of the Tiger Task Force (2005), provisions contained in Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, Schedule Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006.

1.6. National Strategy on Rural Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism has recently notified national strategy on rural tourism. Keeping in view that ecotourism and adventure tourism are largely away from the cities, the strategy for rural tourism is also relevant for promotion of ecotourism and adventure tourism in the country.

1.7. National Strategy and Roadmp for Ecotourism

1.7.1. Despite natural wealth and potential, India ranks quite low in global ecotourism development. The hiatus in the tourism sector brought about by COVID-19 provides a chance to rethink and reset the direction of tourism and the values on which its success is judged. Post pandemic, there will be a trend away from mass tourism and greater focus on ecotourism, adventure tourism, wild life and nature.

1.7.2. In order to provide impetus to the development of ecotourism and adventure tourism in the Country, National Strategy for ecotourism has been prepared. The National Strategy for ecotourism takes into account Ecotourism guidelines of MoEFCC, National Strategy for rural tourism and sustainable tourism.

Chapter 2 – Vision, Mission and Strategy

2.1. Ecotourism Definition

Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.

2.2. Vision

To position India as a preferred destination for ecotourism globally.

2.3. Mission

To develop an enabling ecosystem for growth of Eco Tourism in the Country and create synergies amongst the Central and State Governments, Local communities, conservation NGOs and the private sector for the development of ecotourism in the country.

2.4. Strategic Pillars

Following strategic pillars have been identified for development of ecotourism:

(i).   State Assessment and Ranking
(ii).   State Strategy for Eco Tourism
(iii). IEC, Capacity Building and Certification
(iv).   Marketing and Promotion
(v).   Destination and Product Development
(vi).   Public Private and Community Partnerships
(vii). Governance and Institutional Framework

2.5. Stakeholders

2.5.1. Key Stakeholders

Promotion and development of ecotourism tourism will involve a diverse set of stakeholders, whose role will be crucial for the success of the Strategy. The key stakeholders are:

(i).   Central Ministries
(ii).   State Governments
(iii). Panchayati Raj Institutions
(iv).   Industry
(v).   Non-government organizations
(vi).   Local community

The role and responsibilities of the stakeholders are given below.

2.5.2. **Central Ministries**

Various Central Ministries are involved in the development of eco-tourism. Various Central and State Schemes must be converged and synergy created for major impact. Programs and initiatives of the following Ministries need to be studied in detail for promotion and development of eco-tourism:

(i). **Ministry of Tourism**

Ministry of Tourism is responsible for promotion of Tourism in the Country. The Ministry implements various schemes for creation of infrastructure, marketing and promotion and skill development initiatives for tourism. Various schemes of the Ministry can be leveraged for promotion and development of eco-tourism.

(ii). **Ministry of Rural Development**

The Ministry of Rural Development is working towards sustainable and inclusive growth of rural India through a multipronged strategy for eradication of poverty by increasing livelihoods opportunities, providing social safety net and developing infrastructure for growth. The Ministry of Rural Development is an important stakeholder in the development of rural areas in the Country and contribute towards the objective through various schemes being implemented by the Ministry.

(iii). **Ministry of Environment and Forests**

The Ministry is responsible for implementation of policies and programmes relating to conservation of the country's natural resources including its lakes and rivers, its biodiversity, forests and wildlife. Ministry of Environment is responsible for framing laws and regulations for environment and forests and has a key role in development of sustainable tourism. The Ministry has framed Ecotourism guidelines, which will help the growth of ecotourism in the country. There is need to create more synergy in the efforts of the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Environment for promoting eco and adventure tourism.

(iv). **Ministry of Culture**

Ministry of Culture is responsible to preserve, promote and disseminate all forms of art and culture in the Country and has a large number of Institutions and organization involved in the field of art and culture. The Ministry can

contribute in the promotion of culture and heritage in a sustainable and responsible manner.

(v). **Ministry of Development of North East Region**

The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region is responsible for the matters relating to the planning, execution and monitoring of development schemes and projects in the North Eastern Region. Its vision is to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development of the Region so that it may enjoy growth parity with the rest of the country. Ministry can help development of eco-tourism in north east region.

(vi). **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**

Ministry of Skills can help with various skill development initiatives for sustainable and responsible tourism including promotion of entrepreneurship.

(vii). **Ministry of Textiles**

Ministry of Textiles is responsible for promotion of handicrafts and handlooms and these activities are concentrated in rural areas. Many tourists may be interested to know about handicrafts and the Ministry can provide support and synergy in developing responsible tourism.

(viii). **Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare**

Department of Agriculture is responsible for agriculture, cooperation and farmers welfare. The Department implements various schemes, which impact the farming activities and communities in rural areas. The Department may provide support for Farmstays, agri tourism and other related activities, which have synergies with sustainable and responsible tourism.

2.5.3. **State Governments**

State Governments have a key role for development of tourism in their respective states. Many states have taken important measures for development of sustainable and responsible tourism. Many states have also framed eco-tourism policies and prioritized development of ecotourism and adventure tourism. State Governments will have the primary role in creating momentum for sustainable tourism.

2.5.4. **Panchayati Raj Institutions**

Panchayati Raj Institutions have a strong influence on local communities and their support is vital to the success of ecotourism and rural tourism. Village Panchayats

and other institutions have to be consulted and involved in the preparation of plans for developing ecotourism in their villages.

2.5.5. Industry

Industry players, who specialize in adventure and ecotourism and tour operators apart from accommodation providers such as hotel, B&B, Farm Stay owners and tourist guides are important stakeholders. There is a need to involve industry players, who may be willing to be part of developing sustainable tourism destinations. They may have existing business or may set up new business. A business plan for the destination vetted by Industry is important for the sustainability.

2.5.6. Non-Government Organizations

Non-Government Organizations involved in the areas of sustainable and responsible tourism, integrated rural development, livelihood promotion in rural areas, community development in rural areas can play a great role in forging community linkages.

2.5.7. Local Community

Local community is a key stakeholder and has to be taken on board. The Community has to be made aware of the benefits of sustainable adventure and ecotourism, their apprehensions, if any have to be allayed and they have to be encouraged to participate and be part of the value chain. In order to ensure inclusive and responsible tourism, most of the supplies and services must be sourced from local providers. Their capacity building will have to be done to ensure they become part of the supply chain.

Chapter 3 – State Assessment, Ranking and Strategy

3.1. Ranking of the States on Ecotourism

3.1.1. Ranking as a capacity building exercise

The Ministry of Tourism will conduct ranking of the States, with the key objective to foster competitiveness and encourage States to work proactively towards developing ecotourism with the overarching objective of promoting sustainable tourism. It will be implemented as a capacity development exercise to encourage mutual learning among all states and to provide support in policy formulation and implementation.

3.1.2. Ranking to be based on globally recognized parameters

The broad areas and action points for ranking exercise will be taken global rankings of countries in ecotourism. The States may be suitably classified into leaders, aspiring leaders and emerging States. This will also help prepare a State Specific Report containing analysis of respective ecosystems for promotion of ecotourism, strengths and priority areas for future and best practices adopted by the States.

3.1.3. Ranking to be done through professional support

The ranking exercise will be carried out with professional support and through independent experts from various Institutions both Government and Private. The Ministry of tourism will provide necessary training to the officials and other stakeholders and handhold the States for their participation in the exercise.

3.2. Improving India's world ranking in Ecotourism

Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with other Ministries and State Governments will prepare a plan to improve the ranking of the country in the ecotourism parameters, listed in The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017 of the World Economic Forum. The plan shall be implemented expeditiously and updated as and when new assessment reports are received.

3.3. Need for A Comprehensive State Strategy

Ecotourism like tourism itself require a whole of government approach across the three tiers of the Government namely Central, State and Local Government and strong engagement with private sector, local community and Civil Society organizations. A comprehensive strategy and long-term shared vision will bring all the stakeholders together to unlock the State's ecotourism potential and use tourism as a vehicle for sustainable social and economic development and jobs.

3.4. Guiding Principles for Ecotourism

3.4.1. Ministry of Environment and Forest has laid down following principles for development of ecotourism:

(i). Adopt low-impact wildlife tourism that protects ecological integrity of forest and wildlife areas, secures wildlife values of the destination and its surrounding

(ii). Highlight the biodiversity richness, their values and their ecological services to people

(iii). Highlight the heritage value Of India's wilderness and protected areas

(iv). Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect

(v). Facilitate the sustainability of ecotourism enterprises and activities

(vi). Provide livelihood opportunities to local communities

(vii). Use indigenous, locally produced and ecologically Sustainable materials for tourism activities

3.4.2. In addition to the above regulatory guidelines, the Strategy for ecotourism will also include marketing and promotion, ease of travel, tourism infrastructure and ICT infrastructure, training and capacity building etc.

3.5. Assistance to the States for preparing Strategy

Ministry of Tourism will extend necessary assistance to the States in the preparation of the State Strategy for Eco Tourism.

Chapter 4 – IEC, Capacity Building and Certification

4.1.   **Information, Education and Communication**

4.1.1.   **The need for IEC**

Ecotourism is still evolving and there is great need for a well-planned Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign to create awareness and understanding amongst all stakeholders. The campaign will have to be spearheaded by the Central Government and State Governments will full support of the industry and other Stakeholders including local government functionaries, forest and wildlife officials, local communities and non-government organizations working in the field.

4.1.2.   **Development of IEC material**

Ministry of Tourism with the assistance from technical experts will devise overall IEC material, which can be customised and expanded by the State Governments keeping in view their specific needs and requirements. The material will be both digital and print and will be made available on websites, social media and other channels.

4.1.3.   **State support for IEC**

In addition to IEC material being made available through various channels, the Ministry will work with the States to organize sensitization and training workshops for various stakeholders including Government and Private Sector officials, NGOs and local communities/ institutions. Apart from various aspects of sustainable and responsible tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism, it will also cover the need for enhancing the visitor experience and value chain enhancement for competitive advantage. This tourism focus should be an essential component of each destination.

4.2.   **National and State Resource Centres**

The Ministry of Tourism will set up a National Resource Centre as a source of capacity and expertise at the National level for ecotourism. Similarly, the Ministry will also encourage the State Governments to set up State Resource Centres. These resource centres along with other identified institutions will help in developing adequate material, preparing a pool of master trainers, training of trainers and other capacity building initiatives.

4.3.   **Capacity Building of field functionaries and conservation agencies**

4.3.1.   The Ministry of Tourism will support the State Governments in building the capacity of the conservation agencies and communities for developing and operating world

class ecotourism programmes, in partnership with various stakeholders and private sector. It shall be continuously improved and enhanced.

4.3.2. The State Governments will endeavour to prepare a capacity building plan for communities and regulatory staff for every site to ensure progressive improvement in quality of operations and flow of benefits to communities. Special attention will be paid to impart specialized training to field functionaries on green skilling, on Eco-tourism activities etc.

4.4. Skill development and entrepreneurship

4.4.1. The State Governments will identify the capacity needs of local communities to benefit from ecotourism programmes, through jobs and entrepreneurship development, among other things. This may include training to discharge specialized tasks such as tourist guides, natural science interpreters, patrol partners for protection work, entrepreneurs for small scale homestead-based hospitality industry, small business operators (like souvenir shops, equipments for hire, photography etc).

4.4.2. Ministry of Tourism will support State Governments in undertaking various skill development and entrepreneurship development activities as identified for meeting the needs of the local community. The State Government will also facilitate them in placement and starting their own venture.

4.5. Setting up of Interpretation Centres

4.5.1. Interpretation Centres are an important tool for education and interpretation of ecotourism potential of the area and provide crucial information to the visitors in order to enable them to appreciate the eco-system services and intangible benefits provided by the area. The visitors are sensitized to the significance of conservation and expected behavioural requirements while they are within the pristine area through an effective communication plan.

4.5.2. The Ministry of Tourism and the State Governments will endeavour to set up Interpretation Centres at all the important ecotourism destinations. to Interpretation centres will be equipped with appropriate electronic visualisation tools, signage, audio-visual presentations, interactive learning tools, safety protocol and information material on the area.

4.6. Education, Research & Training on Sustainable, Eco and Adventure Tourism

4.6.1. Ecotourism research, monitoring and training facilities shall be created in identified Institutions across the country to develop ecotourism as a full-fledged academic discipline in the country. School and college curricula should also incorporate

sustainable tourism. Ecotourism shall be included as a discipline in the professional training curricula of all levels of foresters and wildlife managers and their capacity shall be regularly updated through in-service training and study tours to acclaimed ecotourism destinations in India and abroad.

4.6.2. Education and Skill training will cover various aspects of responsible Tourism such as awareness of over tourism impacts, environmental impact and concept of carrying capacity, community participation, indigenous solutions and tourism offerings, entrepreneurship and community development initiatives at local level (Vocal for Local).

4.7. Training and Certification of Guides

Guides and naturalists being one of the most important elements of imparting quality ecotourism experience. The Ministry of Tourism will strengthen the facilities for their training and certification of guides/ naturalists through nationally accepted certification processes across the country.

4.8. Certification for Ecotourism

In order to promote development of adventure tourism and ecotourism in a professional, sustainable and responsible manner, Certification Scheme for tour operators, and other service providers for ecotourism and adventure tourism will be framed.

4.9. Digitalization and branding of Certification Schemes

The entire process of adventure and eco-tourism certification shall be end to end digital. The Certification will have an attractive branding and it will be aggressively promoted by the Ministry of Tourism through all its channels including incredible India website and mobile application.

Chapter 5 – Marketing and Promotion

5.1. Creating a Sub brand

In order to promote India as a destination for Ecotourism, a sub brand around these themes shall be created under the overall "Incredible India" Brand.

5.2. Dedicated Promotional Campaign

There is a need to have a dedicated promotional campaign for positioning India as an adventure tourism destination. India has to focus on utilising its natural heritage. This will require a different promotional strategy than the one for selling monuments and culture. It has to focus on our mountains, rivers, forests and deserts. These campaigns should be planned in partnership with Industry Stakeholders.

5.3. State Specific Campaigns

Every State has its own unique offerings and therefore the States have to plan their own campaign to popularise the State as ecotourism and adventure tourism destination.

5.4. Destination Specific Campaign

It is ultimately the destination which succeeds or fails and therefore destinations will have to plan specific campaigns to showcase their unique offerings.

5.5. Campaign for Responsible Travellers

While supply side interventions are required, there is also a need to work on demand side by making the traveller aware of sustainable and responsible tourism. Responsible behaviour by travellers and demand for more sustainable tourism will lead to more demand for ecotourism. The Ministry in partnership with the States, Industry and Destinations will launch a campaign for responsible traveller. The Campaign will encourage travellers to behave responsibly.

Chapter 6 – Destination and Product Development

6.1. Identification of destinations, profiling and prioritization

6.1.1. Identification of existing and new potential sites

Each State will identify areas for eco-tourism within the Protected Areas, in pristine areas rich in biodiversity or of aesthetic significance through a participatory process involving stakeholders, particularly the local communities, tribal & other traditional forest dwellers. A list of ecotourism destinations both existing and new potential sites will be prepared and profiled.

6.1.2. Prioritization of destinations for development

The State Government will prioritize development of identified destinations based on the existing connectivity and tourist circuits, current tourism ecosystem, unique tourism offerings of the destination/ site and future potential.

6.1.3. Decongestion of existing destination

Established ecotourism destinations shall be decongested where necessary (e.g. prominent tiger reserves; popular trekking trails) through long-term ecotourism planning to spread tourism benefits to other destinations/ sites across Protected Areas, landscapes and other natural habitats.

6.2. Development of prioritized destinations

Development plans for the prioritized ecotourism destinations shall be prepared based on the detailed gap study and benchmarking with national and international best practices and standards. It will include recommendations for connectivity, hard and soft interventions for developing the destination.

(i). **Improving the Connectivity**

Most of the ecotourism activities happen in remote areas and it is important to improve the connectivity of these destinations/ attractions to reduce the travel time. The Development plan must address the challenges of connectivity, if any. The State Governments will explore time saving and cost-effective means such as Chopper and Sea Plane Connectivity.

(ii). **Ecotourism development and management plan**

Ecotourism development and management plans shall be prepared as per the ecotourism guidelines of the Ministry of Environment and Forests in consultation with all stakeholders, professional associations, non-profits

and recognised experts. Ecotourism plans embedded in existing forest working plans, micro plans, wildlife management plans of the forest departments and the zonal master plans and area development plans of other departments/ agencies, shall be reviewed and updated.

The Plan may also include retrofitting existing ecotourism destinations with basic visitor facilities (e.g. interpretation facilities, signage, toilets, garbage disposal, drinking water) inside forests, or along hiking/mountaineering trails.

(iii). **Special restrictions**

Ecologically vulnerable and fragile sites, such as breeding areas, nesting colonies, erosion-prone locations, sites with RET plant species, sources of drinking water, certain parts of core areas of tiger reserves, biodiversity heritage sites, cultural and religious sites etc. may be placed under special restrictions, or may be made no-go areas, if deemed necessary by local authorities, experts and other stakeholders.

(iv). **Demand for budget accommodation**

In view of the large, and growing domestic market consisting of families, students and budget travellers, adequate facilities to accommodate this demand shall be created while ensuring that this segment has a rich educational and recreational experience with minimum environmental impact.

(v). **Soft interventions**

Ecotourism or adventure tourism development plans shall also include the soft interventions such as skill development and entrepreneurship, capacity building, marketing and branding, itinerary development.

(vi). **Impact Assessment**

Potential impacts of every ecotourism activity shall be recorded at the planning stage and mitigation plans shall be developed accordingly. Environmental and social impact assessment of ecotourism in important existing destinations shall be carried out expeditiously and appropriate mitigation plans/ safeguards shall be implemented at the earliest.

(vii). **Monitoring**

Eco-tourism plans will invariably include a dynamic monitoring mechanism, covering number of tourists visiting and the pattern, their level of satisfaction, involvement of local people, scope for improvement, etc. This will facilitate

prediction of growth and preparation for management of the growth of eco-tourism in terms of visitation management, growth of hospitality facilities in neighbourhood, need for security arrangements for the area and so on.

6.3. Implementation of Development Plans

The State Nodal Agency responsible for ecotourism will converge various Central Government and State Government plans for mobilizing resources for implementing the plan. A destination or site level management organization or committee should be set up with the participation of all the stakeholders to spearhead the implementation of development and management plan on ground.

Chapter 7 - Public Private and Community Partnerships

7.1.   **Strengths of Private Sector**

Strengths of the private sector in areas of marketing, operations, product and experience creation, quality assurance and finance etc. shall be harnessed to develop and spread ecotourism through mutually beneficial partnerships including public-private, community-private, public-private-community among others.

7.2.   **Framework for Private Sector Participation**

Central and State Governments will work jointly to evolve a framework for enlisting ecotourism operators, on the basis of globally recognised parameters:

(i).   Those seeking to participate in government or community concessions (contracts) must be enlisted based on their credentials through a transparent process. Such competent and qualified private operators shall be mandated to develop well-dispersed eco-lodges/ camps to develop/ conduct ecotourism and adventure activities.

(ii).   Standardised contract documents and operational guidelines, related to the development and management of contracts and partnerships with private operators, shall be developed, for the benefit of implementing authorities and communities.

(iii).   Appropriate tax and non-tax incentives or other suitable benefits may be provided, by the Central Government as well as State Governments, to ecotourism operators to encourage them to follow globally recognised standards and practices of ecotourism.

(iv).   Private Sector Operators for a particular project shall be selected following a transparent and competitive process.

7.3.   **Ecotourism Blocks to be given for development and management**

State Governments should designate areas for private sector operator to be called ecotourism block for development and management:

(i).   Suitable procedure for delineating "ecotourism blocks" in forest lands shall be developed by the State Governments keeping in view laws and regulations.

(ii).   State Governments may give the selected private sector Operator exclusive access to ecotourism block, on long-term agreement, preferably in partnership with local communities for development and management.

(iii). The operator shall have no right over the forest produce or forest land, except using it for running ecotourism operations as per an approved plan. The local communities shall be entitled to use the forest land as per their rights and privileges as recognised by law.

(iv). Management of forests included in an ecotourism block shall be decided by the State Government in consultation with the operator and the dependent local communities.

(v). Ordinarily, only basic tourist conveniences such as toilets, rain-shelters, zero impact or seasonal tented camping facilities, hiking/ biking trails, dirt tracks, hides/ machaan etc. shall be allowed to be developed on the forest land.

(vi). Residential and other commercial facilities shall be developed outside the forest areas. Where no suitable private land adjoining the assigned land is available for developing residential facilities, limited forest land may be allowed for this purpose, within a minimum impact format and without clearing/ cutting trees. However, no new residential facilities shall be allowed on the forest land included in protected areas notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

(vii). The operator shall be obliged to return the site to its original pristine condition at the end of the agreement period. The facilities thus created will need to be based on sustainable practices, such as, limited capacity, usage of renewable energy, water harvesting and recycling, local employment, solid waste management and sewage treatment plants etc., to ensure pollution free, eco-friendly and socially acceptable operations.

(viii). The operator shall also be obliged to trade the forest carbon in the international market on behalf of the government/ communities, in accordance with international mechanisms such as CDM, REDD+ and other environmental economic instruments.

7.4. **Community and Private Conservancy**

7.4.1. Owners of farmland adjoining forests may be encouraged to adopt ecotourism as an alternative land use, by developing their lands as wilderness or wildlife habitats, individually or collectively, in the form of private or community conservancies.

7.4.2. The Government shall support community and private conservancies through appropriate incentives as such operations will create additional wildlife habitats / wilderness with the concomitant flow of ecosystem services and will also generate rural livelihoods and employment opportunities.

7.4.3.   Conservancies shall be encouraged to run ecotourism operations in collaboration with suitable private operators, under an equitable profit/ benefit sharing arrangement, in order to ensure market access, quality of operations and capital inflow.

7.5.   **Homestays and Community lodges**

Homestays and community lodges, shall be encouraged through appropriate incentives. Partnerships between community-based hospitality initiatives and private operators or reputed conservation NGOs shall be encouraged with the objective of quality assurance. Community initiatives will have to maintain the same environmental standards related to water and energy conservation and garbage disposal as private operators.

Chapter 8 – Governance and Institutional Framework

8.1. Action Plan

Ministry of Tourism will prepare a detailed National Action Plan in consultation with relevant Ministries, State Governments and Industry Stakeholders for implementation of the Strategy. The Action plan will be reviewed and monitored in accordance with the laid down governance mechanism for the same.

State Governments will prepare State specific policy and action plan for development of sustainable tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism. The Ministry will help with model policies and action plans for guidance of the States.

8.2. Governance

In order to ensure that the Strategy is effectively implemented, there is need to review the progress and resolve the issues. Following institutional structure will be followed for the same.

(i). **Vision Group under Union Minister for Tourism**

A Vision Group on Sustainable Tourism under the Union Minister for Tourism will be set up. The Vision Group will include all the Stakeholder Ministries, States, Industry, NGO and Experts. It will provide overall vision and guidance for the development of Sustainable Tourism, Adventure Tourism and Eco Tourism in the Country.

(ii). **IMCCT**

Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee under Cabinet Secretary, already in place, will review and resolve inter-Ministerial issues, which may arise and provide guidance for greater convergence of Central Schemes.

(iii). **National Board on Sustainable Tourism under Secretary (Tourism)**

National Board on Sustainable Tourism under Secretary (Tourism) will be set up. The National Board will include the representatives of the Key Ministries, leading States in sustainable tourism and representatives from Industry, NGO and Experts.

The Board will guide the operationalisation and implementation of various strategic initiatives to strengthen the ecosystem for development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in the Country:

(i) Certification Schemes
(ii) Capacity building

      (iii)   Marketing and promotion

      (iv)   Destination and product development

      (v)   Private Sector Participation

      (vi)   Specific strategies

      (vii)   Any other measures for growth of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in the country.

(iv). State Steering Committee under Chief Secretary

The States will set up a State Steering Committee under Chief Secretary. The Committee will have representation from all the relevant Departments at the State level, representatives of Industry, NGOs and Experts.

The Committee will coordinate, review and resolve issues regarding implementation of strategy and other State specific issues for development and promotion of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in the State.

(v). District level Committee

The States will set up a district level Committee under District Collector to coordinate and review progress at the district level.

(vi). Site level monitoring and Coordination Committee

The States will set up a destination/ site level "Ecotourism Committee", consisting of forest officers, district authorities, representatives of local communities, tour operators, lodge owners and other local stakeholders to provide to provide a forum/ platform for guidance and smooth running of Ecotourism operations.

8.3. National Nodal Agency

Ministry of Tourism will designate National Nodal Agency to support the Ministry of Tourism in coordinating and evolving strategy and actionable plans and schemes for promotion and development of ecotourism in the Country. The Nodal agency will in particular assist the Ministry in undertaking the following functions:

(i). Preparation of detailed Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.

(ii). Identifying national and global best practice and prepare tool kits for their replication by the States

(iii). Benchmarking State policies and standards and prepare model policies and standards

(iv).   Capacity Building measures including setting up of Resource Centres and Centres of Excellence

(v).   Facilitating adoption of digital technologies for ecotourism

(vi).   Formulation of dedicated scheme to support development of ecotourism in the Country

(vii). Any other support, which can facilitate the Ministry of Tourism in development of ecotourism in the Country.

The Nodal agency will set up appropriate structures and professional staffing for supporting the Ministry of Tourism in the implementation of the strategy. The Ministry will provide necessary budgetary support to the Nodal Agency through various schemes for promotion and development of tourism.

8.4.   **State Nodal Agency**

The States will designation a State Nodal Agency to coordinate, facilitate and promote sustainable tourism including promotion of adventure and ecotourism in the State. The agency should be provided with adequate budgetary resources and staff to carry out the assigned responsibilities. The Ministry of Tourism will work with the designated State Nodal Agency to provide necessary financial and technical support under various schemes of the Ministry for development of tourism infrastructure, tourism promotion and capacity building of tourism service providers.