



GSTC RECOGNITION MANUAL

*Requirements for GSTC recognition of
sustainable tourism standards*

**Version 2.0
12 February 2014**

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The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

1250 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 825

Washington, DC 20036

United States of America

www.gstcouncil.org

Telephone: +1 202 887 9040

To make comments on this document, please email recognized@GSTCouncil.org

Document Control

This version of the GSTC Recognition Manual replaces version 1.2 of the GSTC Recognition Manual published in November 2012. Part I and Part II Annex 3 were updated in February 2014 to incorporate the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations. The glossary was updated to reference all terms referred to in GSTC criteria, indicators and manuals.

This document will be updated from time to time, and users should periodically check for later versions on the GSTC website.

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I. Introduction

I.1 The need for sustainable tourism

Travel and tourism account for around 10% of the world's economic activity. It is a rapidly growing sector, with international tourist arrivals forecast to grow from around 1 billion in 2010 to 1.6 billion in 2020¹.

The UN's Millennium Development Goals provide a clear challenge for the development and management of all economic sectors, requiring a focus on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, sound resource management and social equity and wellbeing. Travel and tourism can and must play a major part in addressing these challenges owing to its size, its widespread presence in urban and rural areas across the world, its substantial capacity to drive voluntary shifts of wealth from rich to poor and its special dependency on environmental and cultural resources and social interaction. The latter arises partly from a unique aspect of travel and tourism, that the product is consumed at the place of production.

The impact of travel and tourism on global and local environments and on host communities can be both positive and negative, providing both opportunities and responsibilities.

Negative impacts and concerns associated with travel and tourism include:

- Its contribution to climate change, being responsible for an estimated 5% of global CO₂ emissions which is growing rapidly;
- Depletion of natural and precious resources, such as the use of land and water;
- Creation of pollution of all kinds;
- Social changes and dislocation of traditional societies;
- Pressure on cultural heritage sites, natural environments and biodiversity;
- Poor labour conditions and exploitation in parts of the sector.

Travel and tourism can also deliver many positive benefits, including:

- A growing opportunity for enterprise development and employment creation, with low barriers for entry;
- Direct and indirect support for local communities, through the provision of jobs, income, services and infrastructure;
- Awareness of natural and cultural heritage and support for their conservation;
- Health, wellbeing and educational benefits for tourists and hosts, which should be accessible to all.

Sustainable tourism requires an approach to tourism development and management that recognises and responds to these responsibilities and opportunities.

Actions that encourage, identify and promote a positive response from enterprises are crucial for the future of the tourism sector and the contribution it can make to sustainable development. The tourism sector is highly fragmented. While there are some important multinational players, many of the providers of tourism services are independent businesses and the majority are small and micro enterprises. Tourism enterprises of all sizes are responding in different ways and to different degrees to the need for sustainable tourism.

¹ UN World Tourism Organisation, *Tourism 2020 Vision*, 2010

I.2 The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

GSTC is a multi-stakeholder initiative formed in 2010 under the umbrella of the United Nations, including amongst its founding partners UNEP, UNWTO, UN Foundation, Sabre Holdings and Rainforest Alliance, amongst others. It was formed in response to the challenges and opportunities of sustainable tourism, by merging two previous initiatives.²

Over 150 organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors and from the world of tourism, environmental management and sustainable development have been contributing to the work of the GSTC and its two predecessor bodies.

The GSTC is a Membership Council with a Board of Directors. The Board provides the governance of the organisation. However, the Council, which elects the Board, has responsibility for the by-laws of the GSTC, for its principles, criteria and operational guidelines, for admittance of members and for resolving disputes.

The mission of the GSTC is:

“To improve tourism’s potential to be a driver of positive conservation and economic development for communities and businesses around the world and a tool for poverty alleviation”.

The GSTC fulfils its mission by fostering increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles.

It also works in many other ways to strengthen education, communication, knowledge-sharing and business engagement in the field of sustainable tourism and to achieve improved market access for sustainable tourism products.

I.3 A broad and common agenda for sustainable tourism

The challenges of sustainable tourism articulated earlier encompass economic, social and environmental impacts. This broad spectrum of concern is increasingly recognised by bodies promoting sustainable tourism. UNEP and UNWTO identified an agenda for sustainable tourism based on twelve functional aims³ and showed how there are economic, social and environmental dimensions to each of them. The dimensions are seen as interrelated.

In the private sector, in tourism as well as in other economic spheres, enterprises and investment projects are encouraged to consider a triple bottom line. Many companies report on corporate social responsibility policies and actions, which address a broad range of economic, social and environmental impacts and initiatives beyond straight financial reporting. Some companies use the guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative, the world’s most widely used sustainability reporting framework (www.globalreporting.org).

The GSTC program is in line with this broad approach to sustainable tourism and encourages certification schemes to move beyond a more mono-dimensional, often environmental focus.

The principles for sustainable tourism behind the GSTC program are that:

- Sustainability objectives should be defined and actions coordinated by an effective management system

² The Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council

³ UNEP, UNWTO *Making Tourism More Sustainable, A Guide for Policy Makers*, 2005

- Tourism should bring the greatest possible social and economic benefits to local communities and any negative impacts on them should be minimised
- Local cultural heritage must be respected and opportunities should be taken to strengthen its integrity and richness.
- Impacts on the global and local environment, through pollution and depletion of natural resources, should be minimised and support should be given to the conservation of local landscapes and biodiversity.

These principles of sustainable tourism are seen as relevant in all parts of the world and can be reflected in many different kinds of tourism enterprise. The overall agenda remains the same. However, key concerns about tourism impact and priorities for improving sustainability will vary from place to place. It is hoped and expected that sustainable tourism standards will be adapted to local and industry sector conditions and that they will far exceed the minimum requirements outlined in this manual.

I.4 Principles for the implementation of the GSTC program

The following principles apply to all aspects of the GSTC program – including to work performed by certification scheme owners, CBs and Accreditation Bodies.

1 Integrity

Integrity should be demonstrated in every aspect of the process, requiring honesty, fairness and consistency throughout.

2 Credibility

The process should spread confidence in certification as a meaningful way of identifying and stimulating good sustainability practice in the tourism sector.

3 Impartiality

The process should not be open to any forms of influence which might raise doubts about the objectivity of the decisions taken.

4 Accessibility

Recognition of standards and accreditation should be as accessible as possible to all relevant certification schemes and certification should be as accessible as possible to all tourism enterprises. There should be no discrimination on grounds of size and location and financial barriers should be minimised.

5 Comprehensiveness

All recognized sustainable tourism standards covering sustainable tourism should address all aspects of sustainability, including socio-economic, cultural and environmental impacts.

6 Rigorousness

Accreditation and certification should be robust processes and require high standards and levels of sustainability to be met.

7 Effectiveness

The process should be impacts-driven and shaped to help as many tourism enterprises as possible achieve maximum change towards sustainability. The accreditation programme should strengthen the impact of the certification schemes.

8 Transparency

The standards required and processes adopted should be transparent and available for scrutiny by stakeholders.

9 Diversity

The process should recognise and encourage the diversity of local, regional and sectoral certification schemes, including their criteria and standards, provided there is no loss of sustainability outcomes.

10 Achievability

The accreditation process must be practicable and sustainable over time and not place burdens on certification schemes that they could not meet.

1.5 The position of certification schemes⁴

The GSTC program is designed to be applicable to all schemes certifying or verifying tourism enterprises and destinations for their sustainability management and performance. Relevant certification⁵ schemes and the bodies that run them vary from sizeable international operations or national schemes, some with support from government agencies, to small schemes covering local areas or particular types of tourism product.

The GSTC intends to build a long-term relationship with all certification schemes. An aim of the GSTC is to continually increase the percentage of GSTC-accredited schemes.

It is recognised that many schemes do not currently cover all the elements of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Sustainable Tourism or comply with all of the GSTC requirements for certification bodies. It may take some time for these bodies to complete the changes required to achieve compliance.

The GSTC acknowledges these challenges, and has a number of options for standard owners and certification programs to gain GSTC endorsement.

- **GSTC – Recognized Standard.** This recognises that a sustainable tourism standard is equivalent to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria, and is administered by a standard owner that meets GSTC requirements. These procedures are defined in Part II of this manual.
- **GSTC – Approved** means that a certification program is using a GSTC-recognized standard and is following processes and procedures that have been reviewed and approved by the GSTC. These procedures are defined in the **GSTC Approved Manual**. This option is likely to be faster and cheaper than accreditation for certification programs that are not yet prepared for accreditation, as it will take them through the process step-by-step. The certification programs and their certificate holders will be licensed to use the GSTC marks and logos.
- **GSTC – Accredited.** Certification bodies (CBs) issuing certificates to tourism enterprises conforming to recognized standards must be accredited to the GSTC's requirements, and be licensed to use the GSTC marks and logos. These procedures are defined in the **GSTC Accreditation Manual**.

⁴ "Certification Scheme: [rules, procedures, and management for carrying out certification] related to specified [services], to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply." After draft ISO 17067

⁵ Except where otherwise stated, 'certification' is taken to include verification.

Not all certification schemes cover all aspects of sustainability: economic, social, cultural and environmental. For example, a number are solely covering environmental matters and may grant the use of an eco-label. These schemes would only be eligible for GSTC recognition if they transformed themselves into sustainable tourism certification programs and included the other aspects of sustainability. The GSTC encourages certification schemes, where appropriate, to consider this transition.

II. Normative References

The following documents contain provisions which, through reference in this text, become part of the GSTC Recognition Manual.

For documents which specify a date or version number later amendments or revisions of that document do not apply as a normative requirement. Readers are encouraged to review the most recent editions and any guidance documents available to gain further insight about how the document has changed, and to consider whether or not to implement latest changes.

For documents without dates or version numbers, the latest published edition of the document referred to applies.

- a) ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

Part I: The GSTC Criteria and the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria

This section contains the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC Criteria) and GSTC's benchmarking criteria for sustainable tourism. It explains how they were derived and how they will be maintained and updated.

I. Introduction

The GSTC standard-setting process

The process is implemented by a working group of partners representing public, private and voluntary sector interests from different global regions, following a needs assessment and the determination of scope and terms of reference.

The process of establishing the GSTC Criteria took note of the requirements of ISEAL's Code of Good Practice for Setting Environmental and Social Standards.

The sustainability challenges of tourism and the possible responses available are not static. Pressures, priorities and technologies change over time. The GSTC Criteria will be reviewed and updated to reflect this. In addition, lessons from the application of the GSTC Criteria will point to helpful and necessary improvements.

The GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for sustainable tourism are based on the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC Criteria). **The GSTC Benchmarking Criteria consist of the GSTC Criteria broken down into simple verifiable statements for purposes of evaluating the equivalence of other sustainable tourism standards with the GSTC Criteria.**

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators (GSTC-HTO)

The **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators (GSTC-HTO)** were developed between 2007 and 2008 by a partnership of 27 organisations. The first version of the criteria was released in October 2008 and was publicly available for comment until April 2011. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council reviewed all comments received, responded to each, and revised the criteria accordingly. The revised criteria were available for public comment and review from July 15 – October 15, 2011 in English, French, Spanish, and Mandarin. Again all comments were reviewed and addressed, to produce version 2 of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for hotels and tour operators. The next revision will take place in 2016. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are administered by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

Their development involved a broad-based stakeholder consultation process, which included:

- Consultation with the tourism industry and sustainability experts.
- An analysis of more than 4,500 existing criteria in the field of tourism sustainability, used by over 60 certification schemes and other initiatives.
- Preparing draft criteria and inviting comments on them from across the sector.

- Assessing comments received from over 2,000 stakeholders as a basis for amending the criteria.
- Widely disseminating the final criteria and promoting awareness of them.

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (GSTC-D)

The **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (GSTC-D)** were developed between 2010 and 2013 by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council following a similar process. The first version was released in October 2013.

The need for the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (GSTC-D) was determined in late 2009 by the Destination Stewardship Think Tank co-convened by Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines and Sustainable Travel International. As a result, the GSTC Destination Working Group (the “Destinations WG”) was formed in February 2010. The methodology for the development of the GSTC-D was approved by the Working Group in July 2011, informed by ISEAL guidelines for the development of social and environmental standards.

A working draft of criteria and related performance indicators was proposed in October 2011, incorporating the shared principles from over 37 destination guidelines and standards from around the world. The GSTC Destinations and International Standards Working Groups reviewed the draft and submitted recommendations to the GSTC Board, which approved draft 1 of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (GSTC-D) on 7 March 2012. The criteria were subsequently submitted to a public consultation from 2 April – 4 August 2012 in English, Spanish, French, Mandarin, German, Catalan, and Russian, and they were pilot tested in six Early Adopter destinations in North America, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and Asia between May and August 2012. The Draft 1 criteria were revised to incorporate the comments received from the consultation and from the early adopters. All comments were reviewed and addressed, although not necessarily adopted.

Draft 2 was approved by the GSTC Destinations and International Standards WGs in October 2012 and approved by the Board in November. Draft 2 was published for public consultation from December 1, 2012 to April 15, 2013 in English, Spanish, and Mandarin, as very few comments were received to the first survey in other languages. A second round of early adopters was used to evaluate the Draft 2 criteria and indicators between March and August 2013. Once again, every comment and suggestion was evaluated, and Draft 3 of the criteria, incorporating the results of the second public consultation and the second round of early adopters, was submitted to the Destinations WG in September 2013. After incorporating the recommendations of the WG, the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (GSTC-D) were approved by the GSTC Board on 31 October 2013.

II. Updating the GSTC Criteria

II.1 The official language of the GSTC Criteria is English.

II.1.1 Translations of the GSTC Criteria in other languages can be used, but only GSTC-approved translations shall be used for the purposes of standard recognition.

II.2 The GSTC will update the GSTC Criteria from time to time, and at intervals of no more than five years, or to correct errors.

II.2.1 The GSTC shall, as far as practicable, follow the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Environmental and Social Standards when updating the GSTC Criteria.

II.2.2 Comments and suggestions on the GSTC Criteria can be submitted at any time via the GSTC's website.

II.3 At the start of each review process, the processes to be followed for that revision shall be made available to interested parties through the GSTC's website and in other ways as felt appropriate by the International Standards Development Working Group (ISDWG).

II.3.1 Once issued, any revised GSTC Criteria shall be published promptly, and made freely available in electronic form.

II.3.2 Hard copies shall be provided on request on a cost-recovery basis (printing and shipping).

II.3.3 Changes in the Criteria shall be communicated to all known sustainable tourism standard owners by electronic communication and posting on the GSTC website.

Part I Annex 1 – The GSTC Benchmarking Criteria

The GSTC Benchmarking Criteria are set out below.

The scope of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria is currently limited to (a) accommodation facilities and tour operators and (b) destinations. It will be expanded to other sectors but the present version should not be interpreted as having a wider scope.

The left hand column contains the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, which form the standard.

The right hand column breaks down each criterion into specific statements that identify conditions and actions that are required of tourism enterprises or destinations and that should be reflected in the certification scheme's own standard.

Part I Annex 1.a –GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators

A Demonstrate effective sustainable management

GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
A.1. The organization has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scope, and which addresses environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health and safety issues.	A.1.i	The organization has a long-term sustainability management system (SMS) that is suitable to its size and scope.
	A.1.ii	The SMS is being implemented.
	A.1.iii	The SMS considers environmental issues
	A.1.iv	The SMS considers social and cultural issues
	A.1.v	The SMS considers economic and quality issues
	A.1.vi	The SMS considers health and safety issues
A.2. The organization is in compliance with all applicable local to international legislation and regulations (including, among others, health, safety, labour, and environmental aspects).		
	A.2.i	Legal requirements considered include health, safety, labour and environmental aspects.
	A.2.ii	The organization is in compliance with all applicable local to international legislation and regulations
A.3. All personnel receive periodic guidance and training	A.3.i	All personnel receive periodic guidance and training regarding their roles and responsibilities with respect to environmental practices.

GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
regarding their roles and responsibilities with respect to environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health, and safety issues.	A.3.ii	All personnel receive periodic training regarding their roles and responsibilities with respect to social and cultural practices.
	A.3.iii	All personnel receive periodic training regarding their roles and responsibilities with respect to economic and quality issues.
	A.3.iv	All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in the management of health, and safety practices.
A.4. Customer satisfaction, including sustainability aspects, is measured and corrective action taken.	A.4.i	Customer satisfaction, including sustainability aspects, is measured
	A.4.ii	Corrective action is taken where appropriate.
A.5. Promotional materials are accurate and complete with regard to the organization and its products and services, including sustainability claims. They do not promise more than can be delivered by the enterprise.	A.5.i	Promotional materials are accurate with regard to the organization and its products and services, including sustainability claims.
	A.5.ii	Promotional materials are complete.
	A.5.iii	Promotional materials do not promise more than can be delivered by the organization.
A.6.1. Planning, design, construction, renovation, operation and demolition of buildings and infrastructure comply with zoning requirements and with laws related to protected areas and heritage consideration.	A.6.1.i	Land use is in compliance with zoning requirements and with laws related to protected areas and heritage consideration.
	A.6.1.ii	Planning, design, construction, renovation, operation and demolition are in compliance with zoning requirements and with laws related to protected areas and heritage consideration.
A.6.2. Planning, design, construction, renovation, operation and demolition of buildings and infrastructure respect the natural and	A.6.2.i	Siting respects natural and cultural heritage surroundings
	A.6.2.ii	Planning and design respect natural and cultural heritage surroundings
	A.6.2.iii	Natural and cultural impact has been assessed

GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
cultural heritage surroundings in planning, siting, design and impact assessment.		
A.6.3. Planning, design, construction, renovation, operation and demolition of buildings and infrastructure use locally appropriate sustainable practices and materials.	A.6.3.i	Planning and design are based on locally appropriate sustainable practices and materials.
	A.6.3.ii	Construction is based on locally appropriate sustainable practices and materials.
A.6.4. Planning, design, construction, renovation, operation and demolition of buildings and infrastructure provide access for persons with special needs, where appropriate.	A.6.4.i	Access is provided for persons with special needs, where appropriate.
A.7. Land and water rights, and property acquisition, are legal, comply with local communal and indigenous rights, including their free, prior and informed consent, and do not require involuntary resettlement.	A.7.i	Property, land, and water rights have been acquired in a legal manner.
	A.7.ii	Where applicable, property, land, and water rights have been acquired in compliance with local, communal and indigenous rights, including their free, prior and informed consent.
	A.7.iii	Acquisition of property, land, and water rights does not require involuntary resettlement of inhabitants.
A.8. Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage is provided to customers, as well as explaining appropriate behaviour while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites.	A.8.i	Information is provided to customers about the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage
	A.8.ii	Interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage is provided to customers
	A.8.iii	An explanation is given of appropriate behaviour while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites.

B Maximize social and economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative impacts

GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
B.1. The organization actively supports initiatives for local infrastructure and social community development including, among others, education, training, health, and sanitation.	B.1.i	The organization actively supports initiatives for local infrastructure and social community development, which may include education, training, health or sanitation.
B.2. Local residents are given equal opportunity for employment, including in management positions. All employees are equally offered regular training, experience and opportunities for advancement.	B.2.i	Local residents are given equal opportunity for employment.
	B.2.ii	Local residents are given equal opportunity for employment in management positions
	B.2.iii	All employees are equally offered regular training, experience and opportunities for advancement.
B.3. Local services and goods are purchased and offered by the organization, following fair-trade principles.	B.3.i	Local services and goods are purchased and offered by the organization, following fair-trade principles.
B.4. The organization offers the means for local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture (including food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.)	B.4.i	The organization offers the means for local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture (which may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.).
B.5. A documented code of	B.5.i	A documented code of conduct is implemented for activities in indigenous and local communities

GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities has been developed and implemented, with the collaboration and consent of the affected community.	B.5.ii	The code of conduct has been developed with the consent of and in collaboration with the affected community.
B.6. The organization has implemented a policy against commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children and adolescents.	B.6.i	The organization has a policy against commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children and adolescents.
	B.6.ii	The policy is being implemented by the enterprise.
B.7. The organization offers equal employment opportunities to women, local minorities and others, including in management positions, while restraining child labour.	B.7.i	The organization offers equal employment opportunities to women, local minorities, and others.
	B.7.ii	The organization offers equal employment opportunities to women, local minorities, and others in management positions.
	B.7.iii	The organization does not employ illegal child labour.
B.8. The international or national legal protection of employees is respected, and employees are paid at least a living wage.	B.8.i	The international legal protection of employees is respected
	B.8.ii	The national legal protection of employees is respected
	B.8.iii	Employees are paid at least a living wage.
B.9. The activities of the organization do not jeopardize the provision of basic services, such as food, water, energy, healthcare or sanitation, to neighbouring communities.	B.9.i	The activities of the organization do not jeopardize the provision of basic food and water services to neighbouring communities.
	B.9.ii	The activities of the organization do not jeopardize the provision of basic energy services to neighbouring communities.
	B.9.iii	The activities of the organization do not jeopardize the provision of basic health and sanitation services to neighbouring communities.
B.10. Tourism activity does not adversely affect local access to livelihoods,	B.10.i	Tourism activity does not adversely affect local access to livelihoods, including land and aquatic resource use.

GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
including land and aquatic resource use, rights-of-way, transport and housing.	B.10.ii	Tourism activity does not adversely affect local access to rights-of-way and transport.
	B.10.iii	Tourism activity does not adversely affect local access to housing.

C Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts

GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
C.1. The organization follows established guidelines or a code of behaviour for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimize negative visitor impact and maximize enjoyment.	C.1.i	The organization follows established guidelines or a code of behaviour for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimize negative visitor impact and maximize enjoyment.
C.2. Historical and archaeological artefacts are not sold or traded, and are displayed, only as permitted by local to international law.	C.2.i	Historical and archaeological artefacts are not sold or traded, and are displayed only as permitted by local to international law.
C.3. The organization contributes to the protection of local historical, archaeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, and does not impede access to them by local residents.	C.3.i	The organization contributes to the protection of local historical, archaeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites.
	C.3.ii	The organization does not impede access by local residents to local historical, archaeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites.
C.4. The organization incorporates elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design, decoration, food, or	C.4.i	The organization incorporates elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design, decoration, food, or shops.
	C.4.ii	The organization respects the intellectual property rights of local communities.

GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
shops; while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities.		

D Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts

D.1 Conserving resources		
GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
D.1.1 Purchasing policies favour locally appropriate and ecologically sustainable products, including building materials, capital goods, food, beverages and consumables.	D.1.1.i	The organization has a purchasing policy that favours locally appropriate and ecologically sustainable products, including building materials, capital goods, food, beverages, and consumables.
D.1.2 The purchase and use of disposable and consumable goods is measured, and the organization actively seeks ways to reduce their use.	D.1.2.i	The purchase and use of disposable and consumable goods is measured.
	D.1.2.ii	The organization actively seeks ways to reduce the use of disposable and consumable goods.
D.1.3 Energy consumption should be measured, sources are indicated, and measures are adopted to minimize overall consumption, and encourage the use of renewable energy.	D.1.3.i	Energy consumption is measured.
	D.1.3.ii	Measures have been adopted to minimize overall consumption of energy.
	D.1.3.iii	Sources of energy are indicated.
	D.1.3.iv	Use of renewable energy is encouraged.
D.1.4 Water consumption is measured, sources are indicated, and measures are adopted to minimize overall consumption. Water sourcing is sustainable, and does not adversely affect environmental flows.	D.1.4.i	Water consumption is measured.
	D.1.4.ii	Measures have been adopted to minimize overall consumption of water.
	D.1.4.iii	Sources of water are indicated
	D.1.4.iv	Water sourcing is sustainable, and does not adversely affect environmental flows.

D.2. Reducing Pollution		
GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
D.2.1 Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the organization are measured, procedures are implemented to minimize them, and offsetting remaining emissions is encouraged.	D.2.1.i	Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the organization are measured
	D.2.1.ii	Procedures are implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions controlled by the organization.
	D.2.1.iii	Procedures are encouraged to offset remaining greenhouse gas emissions.
D.2.2 The organization encourages its customers, staff and suppliers to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.	D.2.2	The organization encourages its customers, staff and suppliers to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.
D.2.3 Wastewater, including grey water, is effectively treated and is only reused or released safely, with no adverse effects to the local population and the environment.	D.2.3.i	Wastewater is only reused safely, with no adverse effects to the local population and the environment.
	D.2.3.ii	Wastewater, including gray water, is treated effectively and released safely, with no adverse effects to the local population and the environment.
D.2.4 Waste is measured, mechanisms are in place to reduce waste, and where reduction is not feasible, to re-use or recycle it. Any residual waste disposal has no adverse effect on the local population and the environment.	D.2.4.i	Solid waste is measured. .
	D.2.4.ii	Mechanisms are in place to reduce waste.
	D.2.4.iii	Waste is re-used or recycled.
	D.2.4.iii	Residual waste disposal has no adverse effect on the local population and the environment.
D.2.5 The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, is minimized; and substituted,	D.2.5.i	The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, is minimized.
	D.2.5.ii	The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, is substituted, when available, by innocuous products.

D.2. Reducing Pollution		
GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
when available, by innocuous products or processes. All storage, use, handling, and disposal of chemicals are properly managed.	D.2.5.iii	The storage, use, handling, and disposal of chemicals are properly managed.
D.2.6 The organization implements practices to minimize pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds, and air, water and soil contaminants.	D.2.6	The organization implements practices to minimize pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds, and air, water and soil contaminants.

D.3 Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes		
GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
D.3.1 Wildlife species are not harvested, consumed, displayed, sold, or traded, except as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable and in compliance with local to international laws.	D.3.1	Wildlife species are not harvested, consumed, displayed, sold, or traded, except as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable and in compliance with local to international laws.
D.3.2 No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities in compliance with local to international law. Living specimens of protected and wildlife species are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them humanely.	D.3.2.i	No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities in compliance with local to international law.
	D.3.2.ii	Living specimens of protected and wildlife species are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them humanely.
D.3.3 The organization takes measures to avoid the	D.3.3.i	Native species are used for landscaping and restoration wherever feasible, particularly in natural landscapes.

D.3 Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes		
GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators GSTC-HTO version 2.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
introduction of invasive alien species. Native species are used for landscaping and restoration wherever feasible, particularly in natural landscapes.	D.3.3.ii	The organization takes measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species.
D.3.4 The organization supports and contributes to biodiversity conservation, including natural protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value.	D.3.4.i	The organization contributes to biodiversity conservation.
	D.3.4.ii	The organization supports natural protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value.
D.3.5 Interactions with wildlife, taking into account cumulative impacts, do not produce adverse effects on the viability and behaviour of populations in the wild; and any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized, rehabilitated, and there is a compensatory contribution to conservation management.	D.3.5.i	Interactions with wildlife, taking into account cumulative impacts, do not produce adverse effects on the viability and behaviour of populations in the wild.
	D.3.5.ii	Any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized.
	D.3.5.iii	Any disturbance of natural ecosystems is rehabilitated.
	D.3.5.iv	A compensatory contribution is made to conservation management

Part I Annex 1.b –GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence Version 1.0, 10 January 2014

A. Demonstrate effective sustainable destination management.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
A.1. Sustainable destination strategy The destination has established and is implementing a multi-year destination strategy that is publicly available, is suited to its scale; that considers environmental, economic, social, cultural, quality, health, and safety, and aesthetic issues; and was developed with public participation.	A.1.i	The destination has established a multi-year destination strategy that is suitable to its scale.
	A.1.ii	The strategy was developed with public participation.
	A.1.iii	The strategy is publicly available.
	A.1.iv	The strategy is being implemented.
	A.1.v	The strategy considers environmental and aesthetic issues.
	A.1.vi	The strategy considers social and cultural issues.
	A.1.vii	The strategy considers economic and quality issues.
	A.1.viii	The strategy considers health and safety issues.
A.2. Destination management organization The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector and public sector. This group is suited to the size and scale of the destination, and has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues. This group's activities are appropriately funded.	A.2.i	The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism.
	A.2.ii	The private sector and public sector are involved in the organization.
	A.2.iii	The organization is suited to the size and scale of the destination.
	A.2.iv	The organization has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues.
	A.2.v	The organization's activities are appropriately funded.
A.3. Monitoring The destination has a system to monitor, publicly report,	A.3.i	The destination has a system to monitor environmental, economic, social, cultural, tourism, and human rights issues.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
and respond to environmental, economic, social, cultural, tourism, and human rights issues. The monitoring system is reviewed and evaluated periodically.	A.3.ii	The monitoring information is publicly reported.
	A.3.iii	The monitoring system includes a mechanism for responding to issues that arise.
	A.3.iv	The monitoring system is reviewed and evaluated periodically.
A.4. Tourism seasonality management The destination dedicates resources to mitigate seasonal variability of tourism where appropriate, working to balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultures and environment, to identify year-round tourism opportunities.	A.4.i	The destination dedicates resources to mitigate seasonal variability of tourism where appropriate.
	A.4.ii	The destination has a mechanism to identify year-round tourism opportunities, where appropriate.
	A.4.iii	The mitigation measures balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultures and environment.
A.5. Climate change adaptation The destination has a system to identify risks and opportunities associated with climate change. This system encourages climate change adaptation strategies for development, siting, design, and management of facilities. The system contributes to the sustainability and resilience of the destination and to public education on climate for both residents and tourists.	A.5.i	The destination has a system to identify risks and opportunities associated with climate change.
	A.5.ii	The system encourages climate change adaptation strategies for development, siting, design, and management of facilities that contribute to the sustainability and resilience of the destination.
	A.5.iii	The system contributes to public education on climate for both residents and tourists.
A.6. Inventory of tourism assets and attractions The destination has an up-to-date, publicly available inventory and assessment of its tourism assets and attractions, including natural and cultural sites.	A.6.i	The destination has an inventory and assessment of its tourism assets and attractions.
	A.6.ii	The inventory and assessment include natural and cultural sites.
	A.6.iii	The inventory and assessment are publicly available.
	A.6.iv	The inventory and assessment are up-to-date.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
A.7. Planning Regulations The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies that require environmental, economic, and social impact assessment and integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. The guidelines, regulations and/or policies are designed to protect natural and cultural resources, were created with local inputs from the public and a thorough review process, are publicly communicated, and are enforced.	A.7.i	The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies that are designed to protect natural and cultural resources.
	A.7.ii	The guidelines, regulations and/or policies require: a) environmental, economic, and social impact assessment and b) integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition.
	A.7.iii	The guidelines, regulations and/or policies: a) were created with local inputs from the public, b) underwent a thorough review process, and c) are publicly communicated.
	A.7.iv	The guidelines, regulations and/or policies are enforced.
A.8. Access for all Where appropriate, sites and facilities, including those of natural and cultural importance, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements. Where such sites and facilities are not immediately accessible, access is afforded through the design and implementation of solutions that take into account both the integrity of the site and such reasonable accommodations for persons with access requirements as can be achieved.	A.8.i	Where appropriate, sites and facilities, including those of natural and cultural importance, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements.
	A.8.ii	Where such sites and facilities are not immediately accessible, access is afforded through the design and implementation of solutions that take into account both the integrity of the site and such reasonable accommodations for persons with access requirements as can be achieved.
A.9. Property acquisitions Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions exist, are enforced, comply with communal and indigenous rights, ensure public	A.9.i	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions exist.
	A.9.ii	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions are enforced.
	A.9.iii	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions comply with communal and indigenous rights.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
consultation, and do not authorize resettlement without prior informed consent and/or reasonable compensation.	A.9.iv	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions ensure public consultation.
	A.9.v	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions do not authorize resettlement without prior informed consent and/or reasonable compensation.
A.10. Visitor satisfaction The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report visitor satisfaction, and, if necessary, to take action to improve visitor satisfaction.	A.10.i	The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report visitor satisfaction,
	A.10.ii	The destination has a system to take action to improve visitor satisfaction when necessary.
A.11. Sustainability standards The destination has a system to promote sustainability standards for enterprises consistent with the GSTC Criteria. The destination makes publicly available a list of sustainability certified or verified enterprises.	A.11.i	The destination has a system to promote sustainability standards for enterprises consistent with the GSTC Criteria.
	A.11.ii	The destination makes publicly available a list of sustainability certified or verified enterprises
A.12. Safety and security The destination has a system to monitor, prevent, publicly report, and respond to crime, safety, and health hazards.	A.12.i	The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report crime, safety, and health hazards.
	A.12.ii	The destination has a system to prevent and respond to crime, safety, and health hazards.
A.13. Crisis and emergency management The destination has a crisis and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination. Key elements are communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises. The plan establishes procedures and provides resources and training for staff, visitors, and residents, and is updated on a regular basis.	A.13.i	The destination has a crisis and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination, and is updated on a regular basis.
	A.13.ii	Key elements of the plan are communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises
	A.13.iii	The plan establishes procedures and provides resources and training for staff, visitors, and residents.
A.14. Promotion Promotion is accurate with regard to the destination and its products, services, and	A.14.i	Promotion is accurate with regard to the destination and its products, services, and sustainability claims.
	A.14.ii	The promotional messages treat local communities authentically and respectfully.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
sustainability claims. The promotional messages treat local communities and tourists authentically and respectfully.	A.14.iii	The promotional messages treat local tourists respectfully.

B. Maximize social and economic benefits to the host community and minimize negative impacts.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
B1 Economic monitoring The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is monitored and publicly reported at least annually. To the extent feasible, this should include visitor expenditure, revenue per available room, employment and investment data.	B.1.i	The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is monitored.
	B.1.ii	The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is publicly reported at least annually.
	B.1.iii	Reporting of the direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy should include visitor expenditure, revenue per available room, employment, and investment data.
B2 Local career opportunities The destination's enterprises provide equal employment, training opportunities, occupational safety, and fair wages for all.	B.2.i	The destination's enterprises provide equal employment opportunities and fair wages for all.
	B.2.ii	The destination's enterprises provide equal training opportunities for all.
	B.2.iii	The destination's enterprises ensure occupational safety for all.
B3 Public participation The destination has a system that encourages public participation in destination planning and decision making on an ongoing basis.	B.3.i	The destination has a system that encourages public participation in destination planning and decision making on an ongoing basis.
B4 Local community opinion Local communities' aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with destination management are regularly monitored, recorded and publicly reported in a timely manner.	B.4.i	Local communities' aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with destination management are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) regularly monitored, b) recorded, and c) publicly reported in a timely manner.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
B5 Local access The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary rehabilitates or restores local community access to natural and cultural sites.	B.5.i	The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary rehabilitates or restores local community access to natural and cultural sites
B6 Tourism awareness and education The destination provides regular programs to affected communities to enhance their understanding of the opportunities and challenges of tourism, and the importance of sustainability.	B.6.i	The destination provides regular programs to affected communities to enhance their understanding of the opportunities and challenges of tourism.
	B.6.ii	The destination provides regular programs to affected communities to enhance their understanding of the importance of sustainability.
B7 Preventing exploitation The destination has laws and established practices to prevent commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation and harassment of anyone, particularly of children, adolescents, women, and minorities. The laws and established practices are publicly communicated.	B.7.i	The destination has laws and established practices to prevent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) commercial, b) sexual, or c) any other form of exploitation and harassment of anyone, particularly of d) children, adolescents, e) women, and f) minorities.
	B.7.ii	The laws and established practices are publicly communicated.
B8 Support for community The destination has a system to enable and encourage enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives.	B.8.i	The destination has a system to enable and encourage enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives.
B9 Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade	B.9.i	The destination has a system that supports local and small- and medium-sized enterprises.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
The destination has a system that supports local and small- and medium-sized enterprises, and promotes and develops local sustainable products and fair trade principles that are based on the area's nature and culture. These may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.	B.9.ii	The destination has a system that promotes and develops local sustainable products and fair trade principles that are based on the area's nature and culture. These may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc

C. Maximize benefits to communities, visitors, and culture; minimize negative impacts.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
C1 Attraction protection The destination has a policy and system to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve natural and cultural sites, including built heritage (historic and archaeological) and rural and urban scenic views.	C.1.i	The destination has a policy and system to a) evaluate, b) rehabilitate, and c) conserve natural and cultural sites, including built heritage (historic and archaeological) and rural and urban scenic views.
C2 Visitor management The destination has a visitor management system for attraction sites that includes measures to preserve, protect, and enhance natural and cultural assets.	C.2.i	The destination has a visitor management system for attraction sites that includes measures to preserve, protect, and enhance natural and cultural assets.
C3 Visitor behavior The destination has published and provided guidelines for proper visitor behavior at sensitive sites. Such guidelines are designed to minimize adverse impacts on sensitive sites and strengthen positive visitor behaviors.	C.3.i	The destination has published and provided guidelines for proper visitor behavior at sensitive sites.
	C.3.ii	The guidelines are designed to: a) minimize adverse impacts on sensitive sites and b) strengthen positive visitor behaviors.
C4 Cultural heritage protection The destination has laws governing the proper sale,	C.4.i	The destination has laws governing the proper: c) sale, d) trade, e) display, or

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
trade, display, or gifting of historical and archaeological artefacts.		f) gifting of historical and archaeological artefacts.
C5 Site interpretation Accurate interpretive information is provided at natural and cultural sites. The information is culturally appropriate, developed with community collaboration, and communicated in languages pertinent to visitors.	C.5.i	Accurate interpretive information is provided at natural and cultural sites. The information is a) culturally appropriate, b) developed with community collaboration, and c) communicated in languages pertinent to visitors.
C6 Intellectual property The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals.	C.6.i	The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals.

D. Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
D1 Environmental risks The destination has identified environmental risks and has a system in place to address them.	D.1.i	The destination has identified environmental risks.
	D.1.ii	The destination has a system in place to address environmental risks.
D2 Protection of sensitive environments The destination has a system to monitor the environmental impact of tourism, conserve habitats, species, and ecosystems, and prevent the introduction of invasive species.	D.2.i	The destination has a system to monitor the environmental impact of tourism.
	D.2.ii	The destination has a system to conserve habitats, species, and ecosystems.
	D.2.iii	The destination has a system to prevent the introduction of invasive species.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
D3 Wildlife protection The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards for the harvest or capture, display, and sale of wildlife (including plants and animals).	D.3.i	The destination has a system to ensure compliance with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) local, b) national, and c) international laws and standards for the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) harvest or capture, e) display, and f) sale of wildlife (including plants and animals).
D4 Greenhouse gas emissions The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, minimize, publicly report, and mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including emissions from service providers).	D.4.i	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) measure, b) monitor, and c) publicly report their greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including emissions from service providers).
	D.4.ii	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) minimize and b) mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including emissions from service providers).
D5 Energy conservation The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report energy consumption, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.	D.5.i	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) measure, b) monitor, and c) publicly report energy consumption.
	D.5.ii	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce energy consumption.
	D.5.iii	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
D6 Water Management The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report water usage.	D.6.i	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) measure, b) monitor, and c) publicly report water usage.
	D.6.ii	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce water usage

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
D7 Water security The destination has a system to monitor its water resources to ensure that use by enterprises is compatible with the water requirements of the destination community.	D.7.i	The destination has a system to monitor its water resources.
	D.7.ii	The destination has a system to ensure that the use of water resources by enterprises is compatible with the water requirements of the destination community.
D8 Water quality The destination has a system to monitor drinking and recreational water quality using quality standards. The monitoring results are publicly available, and the destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues.	D.8.i	The destination has a system to monitor drinking and recreational water quality using quality standards.
	D.8.ii	The monitoring results are publicly available.
	D.8.iii	The destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues.
D9 Wastewater The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems, and ensures wastes are properly treated and reused or released safely with minimal adverse effects to the local population and the environment.	D.9.i	The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems.
	D.9.ii	The destination ensures that wastewater is properly treated.
	D.9.iii	The destination ensures that treated wastewater is reused or released safely with minimal adverse effects to the local population and the environment.
D10 Solid waste reduction The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste. Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.	D.10.i	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste.
	D.10.ii	Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.
D11 Light and noise pollution	D.11.i	The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution.

GSTC Destinations Criteria GSTC-D version 1.0	Benchmarking criteria for verifying equivalence	
The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution. The destination encourages enterprises to follow these guidelines and regulations.	D.11.ii	The destination encourages enterprises to follow its guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution.
D12 Low-impact transportation The destination has a system to increase the use of low-impact transportation, including public transportation and active transportation (e.g., walking and cycling).	D.12.i	The destination has a system to increase the use of low-impact transportation, including public transportation and active transportation (e.g., walking and cycling).

Part II: The Standard Recognition Process

This section describes how a standard will be evaluated to determine its equivalency to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria to achieve GSTC-Recognition.⁶

I. Introduction

An important purpose of GSTC recognition of standards is to assure tourism stakeholders that standards, when conformed to, result in travel and tourism operations that the basic requirements of sustainable tourism.

To be GSTC recognized, standards must be equivalent to the GSTC Criteria. Matching of a standard's criteria with each of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria shall provide guidance to whether or not a standard is equivalent.

This Part has six sections and three Annexes:

- Requirements for standard owners
- Requirements for standards submitted for GSTC recognition
- The application process
- The GSTC process for evaluating standards and making recognition decisions
- Fees
- Annex 1 contains information about application forms and associated documents
- Annex 2 contains the process to be followed for complaints and appeals.
- Annex 3 contains the matrix for standard recognition

II. Requirements for standard owners

II.1 A standard's owner shall:

II.1.1 Demonstrate legal ownership of the standard to be reviewed.

II.2 The standard owner shall have documented rules for the updating of the standard, including how:

II.2.1 The standard will be reviewed to ensure continued equivalency with the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria if either the standard or the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria are changed.

II.2.2 Any changes in the standard and requirements will be communicated to the GSTC.

⁶ Equivalent standards might have differences in presentation and even in substance, e.g. in explanatory notes, guidance on how to fulfil the requirements of the standard, preferences for alternatives and varieties. Equivalency for purposes of GSTC Recognition includes harmonized, unified, identical, unilaterally-aligned, and comparable standards. (ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.8, and 6.9)

II.3 The standard owner may provide guidance on the standard to clients and other interested parties

II.4 The conformity of the standard owner with criteria set out in this section shall be assessed by the GSTC in the same way that equivalency of the standard is assessed (see Part II).

II.4.1 The GSTC evaluation report shall have a section which evaluates the conformity of the standard owner with requirements.

II.4.2 Should the standard owner not conform to requirements of this section, the areas of non-conformity shall be noted in the evaluation report.

II.4.3 The GSTC Accreditation Panel may decline to approve a standard applying for recognition should the owner not conform to requirements set out in this section.

III. Requirements for standards submitted for recognition

III.1 The sustainable tourism standard to be reviewed shall be documented and be able to be used as a standard to certify clients conforming to sustainable tourism principles and practices.

III.1.1 The standard shall be written in a form that permits a clear decision on whether a business or activity complies or not with each criterion.

III.2 The application for recognition shall indicate the scope of the standard (e.g. entire businesses, individual hotels only, destinations, or specific tours, etc.) and geographic coverage.

III.3 The standard's coverage and content shall be as consistent as possible with the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria.

III.3.1 Standard owners are encouraged to go beyond the requirements of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria in including additional criteria, local adaptation, or sector specificity.

III.3.2 The content of the standard may take into account local and regional differences, including economic, social and ecological realities or regulatory conditions.

III.3.3 The standard may differ from the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria in the way it is structured and expressed, but should avoid conflicting and inconsistent use of terminology and definitions.

Guidance: Each of the criteria of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria, based on the GSTC Criteria, should be reflected in one or more criteria of the sustainable tourism standard. However, because the GSTC Criteria indicate the minimum requirements for application worldwide, it is expected, but not required, for the sustainable tourism standard to have additional criteria to reflect local cultural and environmental conditions, as well as others specific to the types of activities indicated by the scope of the sustainable tourism standard.

It is not necessary for the criteria of the sustainable tourism standard to follow the same sequence as those of the GSTC Criteria, nor use the same words or language. The content of the sustainable tourism standard may take into account local and regional differences, including economic, social and ecological realities or regulatory conditions.

Where the wording or intent of a criterion is significantly different from the corresponding criterion of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria, an explanation will be required to indicate the way in which the application of the criterion corresponds to the intent of the GSTC criterion. This explanation may include the indicators and evaluation guidelines used by the certification program, where relevant.

III.4 Standard content shall be informed by any guidelines provided by the GSTC to assist standard owners and the GSTC Accreditation Panel in considering equivalency between standards and the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria.

III.5 The standard (or in guidance attached to it) may indicate circumstances where the requirements of the standard may not be applicable.

III.5.1 Where this is done, the practice shall be described in the standard, guidelines, or a policy document.

III.5.2 Reasons for non-applicability shall be as covered in 4.3.3. This may include evidence of total irrelevance to local circumstances or industry sector, or evidence that an issue is fully covered by legislation and regulation that is fully enforced and universally complied with in the countries covered.

Supporting documentation will be requested to justify any differences between the sustainable tourism standard and the GSTC Criteria, as well as those cases where there is no corresponding criterion in the sustainable tourism standard. Supporting documentation may include laws and regulations and documentation of enforcement.

Where local conditions or regulations make the application of a GSTC criterion impossible, illegal, or unreasonable, this must be justified with credible documentation, such as the text of laws and regulations or verifiable field data.

Acceptable evidence might include the text of a law or regulation, as well as convincing evidence that the legal requirement is rigorously enforced in all jurisdictions in which the sustainable tourism standard may be used. In other cases, where there is the complete absence of a condition contemplated by a GSTC Criterion, convincing documentary evidence of this should be provided. For example, the requirements for local hiring and purchasing might be considered inapplicable for a certification program applied exclusively in Antarctica. If, however, that same program were also used to certify activities in a populated jurisdiction, the exemption would not hold. Similarly, the requirement for a code of conduct for indigenous peoples might not apply in a large European city, but would apply if the same standard were used in another locality that does have indigenous populations.

III.6 Where the standard has requirements that are equivalent to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria, but conformity of tourism enterprises may not be required to all the standard's requirements (for example by allowing partial conformity or through use of scores), to be recognized as equivalent to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria the standard must have mechanism which makes conformity to all the GSTC equivalent clauses mandatory.

When a criterion that matches a GSTC Criterion is not mandatory (e.g. there is a point system), there should be an explanation of how compliance with the criterion is ensured.

III.7 The full content of the standard shall be publicly available on the Internet and easily accessible without charge.

III.7.1 Compliance indicators may be retained as confidential information available to candidates for certification, but not necessarily for the general public.

Guidance: The sustainable tourism standard to be evaluated should be published in a form that is readily accessible at a reasonable cost⁷ for interested parties, in printed form or available for download on the Internet. Compliance indicators may be retained as confidential information available to candidates for certification or verification, but not necessarily for the general public.

IV. Application

IV.1 Standard owners wishing to have their standards recognized shall apply online or request an application pack which provides details of the process and contains application documents.

IV.2 The standard owner shall complete the sections of the form “Application for recognition of a standard” (see Part II) relating to the ownership and operations requirements for the scheme.

IV.3 The standard owner shall indicate the degree of correspondence between its own standard and the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria, through completing a matrix provided in the application by mapping the requirements of one standard against the other. The standard owner:

IV.3.1 May be required to justify their belief that any or all of the requirements of its standard correspond to those of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria.

IV.3.2 Shall justify any variations between their standard and the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria.

IV.3.3 Where a standard owner believes that there is justification for non-inclusion of an element of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria in the standard, it may indicate this. In all such cases it shall

- a) Provide a written, evidence-based justification for this non-inclusion.
 - i. Evidence shall demonstrate that the element is not an issue for the sustainability of tourism in any of the countries and types of tourism enterprise covered by the certification scheme.
 - ii. Justification shall not be based on a difference in the meaning and coverage of sustainable tourism between the certification scheme owner and the GSTC.

IV.4 In the form “Application for recognition of a standard”, the standard owner shall undertake to

IV.4.1 Complete the sections of the form “Application for recognition of a standard” (see Part II Section 2) relating to the ownership and operations requirements for the scheme.

⁷ A cost for obtaining the standard does not put it out of reach of the financial capabilities of the large majority of interested parties. Application for certification must not be a requirement for obtaining the standard.

IV.4.2 Give the GSTC all updated versions of their standard within 10 days of it being updated. GSTC will only process upon receipt of all requirements.

IV.4.3 Abide by GSTC's requirements for recognition.

IV.4.4 Follow Part II Annex 3's processes in the event of a complaint or an appeal.

IV.4.5 Inform the GSTC Accreditation Panel of any substantial changes to the ownership of the standard.

IV.5 The GSTC will not reveal the names of standards that have applied for recognition, but have not completed the process or which have not achieved recognition.

Guidance: The results of the evaluation of the standard are confidential, with the results available only to the GSTC Secretariat and Accreditation Panel. Only those standards that are recognized will be publicly identified.

V. GSTC review of applications and recognition of standards

V.1 The completed application form together with all the documentation requested shall be reviewed for completeness by GSTC staff, who may request further information and documentation.

V.2 Once satisfied that the application is complete, GSTC staff shall ask the GSTC Accreditation Panel to appoint an impartial qualified person or persons to act as a reviewer (the "reviewer") and undertake a review of the standard against the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria. The reviewer may be a GSTC staff member permanently appointed to review all standards, except in cases of conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof.

V.3 The appointed reviewer(s) shall undertake an assessment of the equivalency of the standard against the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria. The reviewer(s) shall:

V.3.1 Draw the attention of the standard owner to any areas where the standard appears not to be equivalent to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria, and ask for further clarification if required

V.3.2 Ask the standard owner to comment on any areas where the standard may not appear to be equivalent, and may ask the standard owner to provide further evidence relating to the equivalency of its standard.

V.3.3 Write an evaluation report based on the assessment of the equivalency of the standard to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria.

V.3.4 Submit the report to the standard owner for comment, with a request to either
a) Correct any areas where equivalency has not been established; or

V.3.5 Update the report on receipt of the requested information from the standard owner.

V.4 The reviewer(s) shall make a recommendation on whether or not recognition should be granted in the final evaluation report.

V.4.1 A positive recommendation shall be made if the reviewer(s) involved believe that the applicant standard is equivalent to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria.

V.4.2 A negative recommendation shall be accompanied by a summary of which areas are felt not to be equivalent, and of the views of the standard owner on equivalency of those areas.

V.5 The GSTC Accreditation Panel shall review the evaluation report and make a decision on whether or not to grant recognition of the standard.

V.6 GSTC staff shall inform the standard owner of the GSTC Accreditation Panel's decision on recognition:

V.6.1 If the decision is not to grant recognition, the GSTC Accreditation Panel shall specify what if any steps the standard owner must take before recognition can be granted.

a) Should the standard owner submit further information or a revised standard, the process shall recommence at 4.3.

V.6.2 If the decision is to grant recognition with conditions to be met by a specified date, the standard owner shall:

a) Commit to meet the conditions by the specified date.

b) Acknowledge that recognition will be withdrawn if the conditions have not been met by the specified date.

c) Agree to submit evidence to the GSTC that the conditions have been met prior to the specified date.

V.6.3 If the decision is to grant recognition with or without conditions, the GSTC shall provide the standard owner with a licence agreement (or similar document) regarding claims that can be made, and the terms upon which they may be made.

V.7 The GSTC will notify standard owners of the timetable for review and revision of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria and invite their involvement in the revision process.

V.8 The GSTC Accreditation Panel will give due notice to standard owners of any changes made to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria and subsequent actions that they may be required to take.

V.9 The GSTC Accreditation Panel shall consider all revisions of standards submitted to it, and if it feels necessary, shall require any or all steps in the recognition process to be repeated.

V.10 Should the GSTC Accreditation Panel have reason to be concerned about the ongoing conformity of an already recognized standard with the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria, it may require the standard owner to provide further information, and may, as an ultimate sanction, withdraw recognition.

V.11 The GSTC will make publicly available a list of the recognized standards together with a brief summary of each recognized standard, approved for publication by the standard owner.

V.12 The GSTC will make publicly available and implement a clear policy on claims of GSTC recognition of standards. This will include surveillance of the use of those claims and taking action against incorrect use.

VI. Fees for GSTC recognition of standards

VI.1 A standard owner will be required to pay a fee for the process of recognizing its standard.

VI.2 Fees will be paid upon application and before recognition.

VI.3 A scale of charges will be determined by the GSTC.

VI.3.1 The level of fee shall reflect the amount of work required in considering the equivalency of the standard for which recognition is applied for,

VI.3.2 Fees may include a fixed component plus a time-based fee.

VI.4 The current charges will be made publicly available by the GSTC on its website and upon request

Part II Annex 1 – Application for Recognition

The application documentation that must be completed and sent to the GTSC for both recognition of a certification scheme owner (Part II) and recognition of a standard (Part II) includes:

From GSTC, and available from the GSTC on request:

- Application form
- Matrix for standard comparison with the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria

Documents that are required from the standard owner include:

- The standard, in its native language and in English translation.
- The completed comparison matrix, in English.
- All other relevant documents required to show conformity to GSTC requirements.

Part II Annex 2 – The GSTC Appeals Procedure

1. Complaints

- 1.1 Any complaints made about matters relating to recognition processes shall be submitted to the GSTC.
- 1.2 The GSTC shall forward complaints to the GSTC Accreditation Panel, who will discuss the complaint with the complainant and / or standard owner and agree appropriate action.
- 1.3 The GSTC shall record all actions taken and communicate the outcome of the complaint to the complainant.

2. Appeal from a standard owner regarding a GSTC Recognition decision

- 2.1 An appeal by a standard owner against an GSTC recognition decision may only be due to:
 - 2.1.1 Refusal by the GSTC to accept its application for recognition;
 - 2.1.2 Refusal to proceed with a recognition evaluation;
 - 2.1.3 A decision to refuse, suspend or withdraw recognition and any other action that impedes the attainment of recognition.
- 2.2 The grounds for an appeal are limited to:
 - 2.2.1 An appeal based on the grounds that the GSTC has not followed its own procedures or met the GSTC Recognition Manual's requirements for recognition; or
 - 2.2.2 An appeal based on the grounds that the GSTC has incorrectly interpreted the requirements for recognition.
- 2.3 Notifications of appeal shall be received within 30 days of the GSTC decision being communicated to the standard owner, and shall be directed to the GSTC Executive Director. The appeal notice does not have a set format but shall
 - 2.3.1 Be in writing and signed by the appealing standard owner or its legal representative;
 - 2.3.2 Specify the grounds on which the appeal is made; (4.2)
 - 2.3.3 Be accompanied by relevant documented objective evidence;
 - 2.3.4 Indicate what steps were taken to resolve the issue prior to lodging the appeal;
 - 2.3.5 Contain an agreement to pay the costs of the appeal process, if and as allocated by the Appeals Panel;
 - 2.3.6 Contain an agreement to adhere to all terms and provisions of this procedure.
- 2.4 The GSTC Executive Director shall verify that the conditions for appeal in 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 have been met, and if not, shall so advise the appellant.
- 2.5 If and once conditions have been met, the GSTC Executive Director shall formally acknowledge receipt of the appeal.
- 2.6 An Appeals Panel shall be established by the GSTC Board.

- 2.6.1 Appeal Panel Terms of Reference and operating procedures are described in Appendix 1, but may be amended in the sole discretion of the Appeals Panel to suit the nature of the appeal.
- 2.7 Copies of the Appeal Panel decision shall be forwarded to the appellant and GSTC personnel as appropriate by the Appeal Panel secretary within seven days of the decision being made.
- 2.8 The GSTC shall be responsible to ensure that the appellant undertakes any required actions, and for taking any actions it is responsible for.
- 2.9 The GSTC shall verify that effective actions have been taken.
- 2.10 The decision of the Appeals Panel shall be binding on all parties and no further appeal on the same matter shall be accepted.
- 2.11 The Appeal Panel secretary shall be responsible for keeping records of the appeal. On the instruction of the Appeal Panel chair, these may be sealed to protect confidentiality.

3. Review of Appeals

- 3.1 Records of appeals shall be reviewed at GSTC Accreditation Panel meetings.
- 3.2 If the GSTC Accreditation Panel request any action from the GSTC additional to that already taken, or actions of a more general nature, these actions shall be undertaken by the GSTC.

Appendix 1: Appeals Panel: Terms of Reference and Procedure

1.0 Membership

- 1.1 Up to three members will be appointed to each Appeal Panel, invited by the GTSC Executive Director on behalf of the GSTC Board.
- 1.2 Persons not from the Accreditation Panel shall be enrolled as Appeal Panel members to ensure that the Appeal Panel has the expertise, balance of interests and impartiality required to make a decision.
- 1.3 Appeal Panel members shall be independent and impartial (no conflict of interest) to the appeal in question.
- 1.4 Appeal Panel members will be requested to sign a confidentiality agreement if they have not already done so.
- 1.5 The appellant will have opportunity to object to Appeal Panel membership on grounds of them having a conflict of interest. The Appeal Panel shall consider such a challenge, but will not be bound to change its membership.
- 1.6 One Appeal Panel member shall act as chair, appointed by the Appeal Panel members.
- 1.7 Members will have knowledge of accreditation and standards and may seek additional advice as they see fit.

2.0 Functions of the Appeal Panel:

- 2.1 To decide on the validity of the appeal made by the owner of a standard (the “Appellant”) against a GSTC decision on recognition of a standard.
- 2.2 To make a binding decision on the appeal.
- 2.3 To advise the parties of their final decision(s).

3.0 Procedure

- 3.1 The GSTC Executive Director shall appoint a staff member not directly involved with the appeal to act as secretary to the Appeal Panel.
- 3.2 The GSTC Executive Director shall forward all information related to the appeal to the Appeal Panel members.
- 3.3 All parties may be requested by the Appeal Panel to provide additional information, attend in person meetings (at each party’s cost) or participate in conference calls as required.
- 3.4 Reasonable efforts shall be made to ensure that all parties have an opportunity to put their case to the Appeal Panel – generally written form is preferred.
- 3.5 The Appeal Panel shall make its own operating rules and procedures as necessary,
- 3.6 The Appeal Panel shall bear in mind the grounds for appeal:
 - 3.6.1 Should the grounds for appeal be that the GSTC has not followed procedures, the Appeal Panel shall limit its investigation to whether or not the procedure has been followed.
 - 3.6.2 Where the procedure is unclear or is silent on a matter, the GSTC’s interpretation of a requirement shall prevail unless it is felt by the Appeals Panel to be against standards and/or certification industry best practice, or against the principles of natural justice;

- 3.6.3 Should the grounds for appeal be that the GSTC has incorrectly interpreted a requirement of the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria, the GSTC ISDWG shall be asked to provide an interpretation which shall be binding;
- 3.6.4 Should the grounds for appeal be that GSTC's has incorrectly interpreted a requirement of its own procedure, GSTC's Accreditation Panel shall be asked to provide an interpretation which shall be binding;
- 3.7 The Appeal Panel chair shall determine the most appropriate method to review the appeal. It may be conducted by conference call, email or by meeting.
- 3.8 Parties may be asked by the Appeal Panel chair to present oral arguments at an in-person review meeting. Use of lawyers for this purpose is not allowed; the parties involved shall represent themselves.
- 3.9 No timescales are defined but it is recommended that the appeal review is held within 60 days of the formation of the Appeal Panel, and the appeal decision be made within 30 days of the Appeal Panel's review.
- 3.10 While a consensus approach to decision making is desirable, if this is not possible the appeal decision shall be made by simple majority vote. In the event of a tied vote, the Appeal Panel chair does not have a casting vote.
- 3.11 The Appeals Panel will communicate their decision to all parties, which will be binding and no further appeal shall be permitted.
- 3.12 Where required the GSTC Executive Director will take follow-up action.
- 3.13 On completion of the appeal all records will be forwarded to the Appeal Panel secretary for retention.

4.0 Costs:

- 4.1 The cost of hearing an appeal shall be determined by the GSTC.
- 4.2 The Appeal Panel shall determine the apportionment of the costs of the Appeal.
 - 4.2.1 In apportioning costs, the Appeal Panel shall commence with the assumption that cost should be borne equally between the Appellant and the GSTC.
 - 4.2.2 Should the Appeal Panel consider that the appeal is frivolous and without merit, it may require the appellant to pay a proportion of up to 100% of the costs.
 - 4.2.3 Should the Appeal Panel consider that the GSTC has acted in a way that does not display all due diligence, it may require the GSTC to pay a proportion up to 100% of the costs.
- 4.3 In the event that the appellant has been ordered to pay the costs, or part of them, the appellant will be under obligation to pay the amount due to the GSTC within ten days of the date of the decision.

Part II Annex 3 – Matrix for evaluation of a certification standard with the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria

Annex 3a: Evaluation matrix for hotel and tour operator standards

Name of standard:

GSTC Benchmarking criteria for hotels and tour operators		Standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
GSTC #	GSTC Standard criteria	Please enter the identifying numbers of all of your criteria that are equivalent to the GSTC criterion on the left (may be >1)	Please enter the full text of all of your criteria that are equivalent to the GSTC criterion on the left (may be >1)	Mandatory ? Y/N for each criterion	Explanation of correspondence (may include indicators & evaluation criteria)	Justification of differences or omissions	
A. Demonstrate effective sustainable management.							
A.1	The organization has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scope, and which addresses environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health and safety issues.						
A.1.i	The organization has a long-term sustainability management system (SMS) that is suitable to its size and scope.						
A.1.ii	The sustainability management system (SMS) is being implemented.						
A.1.iii	The SMS considers environment						

	al issues						
A.1.iv	The SMS considers social and cultural issues.						
A.1.v	The SMS considers economic and quality issues						
A.1.vi	The SMS considers health and safety issues						
A.2	The organization enterprise is in compliance with all relevant applicable local to international or local legislation and regulations (including, among others, health, safety, labor, and environmental aspects).						
A.2.i	Legal requirements considered include health, safety, labor and environmental aspects.						
A.2.ii	The organization is in compliance with all applicable local to international legislation and regulations.						
A.3	All personnel receive periodic guidance and training regarding their roles and responsibilities with respect to environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health, and safety issues.						
A.3.i	All personnel receive periodic guidance and training regarding their roles and responsibilities with respect to environmental practices.						

A.3.ii	All personnel receive periodic training regarding their roles and responsibilities with respect to social and cultural practices.						
A.3.iii	All personnel receive periodic training regarding their roles and responsibilities with respect to economic and quality issues.						
A.3.iv	All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in the management of health, and safety practices.						
A.4	Customer satisfaction, including sustainability aspects, is measured and corrective action taken.						
A.4.i	Customer satisfaction, including sustainability aspects, is measured.						
A.4.ii	Corrective action is taken where appropriate.						
A.5	Promotional materials are accurate and complete with regard to the organization and its products and services, including sustainability claims. They do not promise more than can be delivered by the enterprise.						
A.5.i	Promotional materials are accurate with regard to the organization						

	and its products and services, including sustainability claims.						
A.5.ii	Promotional materials are complete						
A.5.iii	Promotional materials do not promise more than can be delivered by the enterprise.						
A.6. Planning, design, construction, renovation, operation and demolition of buildings and infrastructure ...							
A.6.1	...comply with zoning requirements and with laws related to protected areas and heritage consideration.						
A.6.1.i	Land use is in compliance with zoning requirements and with laws related to protected areas and heritage consideration.						
A.6.1.ii	Planning, design, construction, renovation, operation and demolition are in compliance with zoning requirements and with laws related to protected areas and heritage consideration.						
A.6.2	...respect the natural and cultural heritage surroundings in planning, siting, design and impact assessment						
A.6.2.i	Siting respects natural and cultural						

	heritage surroundings.						
A.6.2.ii	Planning and design respect natural and cultural heritage surroundings.						
A.6.2.ii i	Natural and cultural impact has been assessed						
A.6.3	...use locally appropriate sustainable practices and materials.						
A.6.3.i	Planning and design are based on locally appropriate sustainable practices and materials.						
A.6.3.ii	Construction is based on locally appropriate sustainable practices and materials.						
A.6.4	...provide access for persons with special needs, where appropriate.						
A.6.4.i	Access is provided for persons with special needs, where appropriate.						
A.7	Land and water rights, and property acquisition, are legal, comply with local communal and indigenous rights, including their free, prior and informed consent, and do not require involuntary resettlement.						
A.7.i	Property, land, and water rights have been acquired in a legal manner.						
A.7.ii	Where applicable, property, land, and water rights have been						

	acquired in compliance with local, communal and indigenous rights, including their free, prior and informed consent.						
A.7.iii	Acquisition of property, land, and water rights does not require involuntary resettlement of inhabitants.						
A.8	Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage is provided to customers, as well as explaining appropriate behavior while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites.						
A.8.i	Information is provided to customers about the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage						
A.8.ii	Interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage is provided to customers						
A.8.iii	An explanation is given of appropriate behavior while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites.						

B. Maximize social and economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative impacts.							
B.1.	The organization actively supports initiatives for local infrastructure and social community development including, among others, education, training, health, and sanitation.⁸						
B.2	Local residents are given equal opportunity for employment, including in management positions. All employees are equally offered regular training, experience and opportunities for advancement.						
B.2.i	Local residents are given equal opportunity for employment.						
B.2.ii	Local residents are given equal opportunity for employment in management positions						
B.2.iii	All employees are equally offered regular training, experience and opportunities for advancement.						
B.3	Local services and goods are purchased and offered by the organization,						

⁸ Infrastructure: improvement or maintenance of community public institutions and physical plant (roads, aqueducts, sewage treatment, etc.).

	following fair-trade principles.						
B.4	The organization offers the means for local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture (including food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.)						
B.5	A documented code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities has been developed and implemented, with the collaboration and consent of the affected community.						
B.5.i	A documented code of conduct is implemented for activities in indigenous and local communities						
B.5.ii	The code of conduct has been developed with the consent of and in collaboration with the affected community.						

B.6	The organization has implemented a policy against commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children and adolescents.⁹						
B.6.i	The organization has a policy against commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children and adolescents.						
B.6.ii	The policy is being implemented by the enterprise.						
B.7	The organization offers equal employment opportunities to women, local minorities and others, including in management positions, while restraining child labor.¹⁰						
B.7.i	The organization offers equal employment opportunities to women, local minorities, and others.						
B.7.ii	The organization offers equal employment opportunities to women, local minorities, and others in management positions.						

⁹ The signing of the code of conduct from UNWTO, UNICEF, ECPAT, etc. is evidence of implementation of policies (see www.thecode.org).

¹⁰ “The term “child labour” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.”
<http://www.ilo.org/pec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

B.7.iii	The organization does not employ illegal child labor.						
B.8	The international or national legal protection of employees is respected, and employees are paid at least a living wage.						
B.8.i	The international legal protection of employees is respected						
B.8.ii	The national legal protection of employees is respected						
B.8.iii	Employees are paid at least a living wage.						
B.9	The activities of the organization do not jeopardize the provision of basic services, such as food, water, energy, healthcare or sanitation, to neighbouring communities.¹¹						
B.9.i	The activities of the organization do not jeopardize the provision of basic food and water services to neighboring communities.						
B.9.ii	The activities of the organization do not jeopardize the provision of basic energy services to neighboring communities.						
B.9.iii	The activities of the organization do not jeopardize the						

¹¹ including beachfront and waterfront access

	provision of basic health and sanitation services to neighboring communities.						
B.10	Tourism activity does not adversely affect local access to livelihoods, including land and aquatic resource use, rights-of-way, transport and housing.						
B.10.i	Tourism activity does not adversely affect local access to livelihoods, including land and aquatic resource use.						
B.10.ii	Tourism activity does not adversely affect local access to rights-of-way and transport.						
B.10.iii	Tourism activity does not adversely affect local access to housing.						
C. Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts							
C.1	The organization follows established guidelines or a code of behaviour for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimize negative visitor impact and maximize enjoyment.						
C.2	Historical and archaeological						

	al artefacts are not sold or traded, and are displayed, only as permitted by local to international law.						
C.3	The organization contributes to the protection of local historical, archeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, and does not impede access to them by local residents.						
C.3.i	The organization contributes to the protection of local historical, archeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites.						
C.3.ii	The organization does not impede access by local residents to local historical, archeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites.						
C.4	The organization incorporates elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design, decoration, food, or shops; while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities.						
C.4.i	The organization incorporates elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design,						

	decoration, food, or shops.						
C.4.ii	The organization respects the intellectual property rights of local communities.						
D. Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts							
D.1. Conserving resources							
D.1.1	The organization has a purchasing policy that favours locally appropriate and ecologically sustainable products, including building materials, capital goods, food, beverages, and consumables .						
D.1.2	The purchase and use of disposable and consumable goods is measured, and the organization actively seeks ways to reduce their use.						
D.1.2.i	The purchase and use of disposable and consumable goods is measured						
D.1.2.ii	The organization actively seeks ways to reduce the use of disposable and consumable						

	goods.						
D.1.3	Energy consumption should be measured, sources are indicated, and measures are adopted to minimize overall consumption, and encourage the use of renewable energy.						
D.1.3.i	Energy consumption is measured						
D.1.3.ii	Measures have been adopted to minimize overall consumption of energy						
D.1.3.ii i	Sources of energy are indicated						
D.1.3.i v	Use of renewable energy is encouraged.						
D.1.4	Water consumption is measured, sources are indicated, and measures are adopted to minimize overall consumption. Water sourcing is sustainable, and does not adversely affect environmental flows.						
D.1.4.i	Water consumption is measured						
D.1.4.ii	Measures have been adopted to minimize overall consumption of water						
D.1.4.ii i	Sources of water are indicated.						
D.1.4.i v	Water sourcing is sustainable, and does not adversely affect environmental flows.						
D.2. Reducing pollution							
D.2.1	Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the organization are measured, procedures are implemented to minimize them, and offsetting remaining emissions is encouraged.						

D.2.1.i	Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the organization are measured						
D.2.1.ii	Procedures are implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions controlled by the organization						
D.2.1.ii i	Procedures are encouraged to offset remaining greenhouse gas emissions.						
D.2.2	The organization encourages its customers, staff and suppliers to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.						
D.2.3	Wastewater, including gray water, is effectively treated and is only reused or released safely, with no adverse effects to the local population and the environment.						
D.2.3.i	Wastewater, including gray water, is treated effectively and released safely, with no adverse effects to the local						

	population and the environment.						
D.2.3.ii	Wastewater is only reused safely, with no adverse effects to the local population and the environment.						
D.2.4	Waste is measured, mechanisms are in place to reduce waste, and where reduction is not feasible, to re-use or recycle it. Any residual waste disposal has no adverse effect on the local population and the environment.						
D.2.4.i	Solid waste is measured. .						
D.2.4.ii	Mechanisms are in place to reduce waste.						
D.2.4.ii i	Waste is re-used or recycled.						
D.2.4.i v	Residual waste disposal has no adverse effect on the local population and the environment.						
D.2.5	The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, is minimized; and substituted, when available, by innocuous products or processes. All storage, use, handling, and disposal of chemicals are properly managed.						
D.2.5.i	The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, is minimized.						
D.2.5.ii	The use of harmful substances, including						

	pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, is substituted, when available, by innocuous products.						
D.2.5.ii	The storage, use, handling, and disposal of chemicals are properly managed.						
D.2.6	The organization implements practices to reduce pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds, and air, water, and soil contaminants .						
D.3. Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems, and landscapes							
D.3.1	Wildlife species are not harvested, consumed, displayed, sold, or traded, except as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable and in compliance						

	with local to international laws.						
D.3.2	No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities in compliance with local to international law. Living specimens of protected and wildlife species are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them humanely.						
D.3.2.i	No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities in compliance with local to international law.						
D.3.2.ii	Living specimens of protected and wildlife species are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them humanely.						
D.3.3	The organization takes measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species. Native species are used for landscaping and restoration wherever feasible, particularly in natural landscapes.						
D.3.3.i	Native species are used for landscaping and restoration wherever feasible, particularly in natural landscapes.						
D.3.3.ii	The organization takes measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species.						
D.3.4	The organization supports and contributes to biodiversity conservation, including natural						

	protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value.						
D.3.4.i	The organization contributes to biodiversity conservation.						
D.3.4.ii	The organization supports natural protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value.						
D.3.5	Interactions with wildlife, taking into account cumulative impacts, do not produce adverse effects on the viability and behaviour of populations in the wild; and any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized, rehabilitated, and there is a compensatory contribution to conservation management.						
D.3.5.i	Interactions with wildlife, taking into account cumulative impacts, do not produce adverse effects on the viability and behaviour of populations in the wild.						
D.3.5.ii	Any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized.						
D.3.5.ii i	Any disturbance of natural ecosystems is rehabilitated.						
D.3.5.i v	A compensatory contribution is made to conservation management						

Annex 3b: Evaluation matrix for destination standards

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
A. Demonstrate effective sustainable destination management.							
A.1	Sustainable destination strategy The destination has established and is implementing a multi-year destination strategy that is publicly available, is suited to its scale; that considers environmental, economic, social, cultural, quality, health, and safety, and aesthetic issues; and was developed with public participation.						
A.1.i	The destination has established a multi-year destination strategy that is suitable to its scale.						
A.1.ii	The strategy was developed with public participation.						
A.1.iii	The strategy is publicly available.						
A.1.iv	The strategy is being implemented.						
A.1.v	The strategy considers environmental and aesthetic issues.						
A.1.vi	The strategy considers social and cultural issues.						
A.1.vii	The strategy considers economic and quality issues.						
A.1.viii	The strategy considers health and safety issues.						
A.2	Destination management organization The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector and public sector. This group is suited to the size and scale of the destination, and has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues. This group's activities are appropriately funded.						
A.2.i	The destination						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism.						
A.2.ii	The private sector and public sector are involved in the organization.						
A.2.iii	The organization is suited to the size and scale of the destination.						
A.2.iv	The organization has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues.						
A.2.v	The organization's activities are appropriately funded.						
A.3	Monitoring The destination has a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to environmental, economic, social, cultural, tourism, and human rights issues. The monitoring system is reviewed and evaluated periodically.						
A.3.i	The destination has a system to monitor environmental, economic, social, cultural, tourism, and human rights issues.						
A.3.ii	The monitoring information is publicly reported.						
A.3.iii	The monitoring system includes a mechanism for						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	responding to issues that arise.						
A.3.iv	The monitoring system is reviewed and evaluated periodically.						
A.4	Tourism seasonality management The destination dedicates resources to mitigate seasonal variability of tourism where appropriate, working to balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultures and environment, to identify year-round tourism opportunities.						
A.4.i	The destination dedicates resources to mitigate seasonal variability of tourism where appropriate.						
A.4.ii	The destination has a mechanism to identify year- round tourism opportunities, where appropriate.						
A.4.iii	The mitigation measures balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultures and environment.						
A.5	Climate change adaptation The destination has a system to identify risks and opportunities associated with climate change. This system encourages climate change adaptation strategies for development, siting, design, and management of facilities. The system contributes to the sustainability and resilience of the destination and to public education on climate for both residents and tourists.						
A.5.i	The destination has a system to identify risks and opportunities associated with climate change.						
A.5.ii	The system encourages climate change adaptation strategies for development,						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	siting, design, and management of facilities that contribute to the sustainability and resilience of the destination.						
A.5.iii	The system contributes to public education on climate for both residents and tourists.						
A.6	Inventory of tourism assets and attractions The destination has an up-to-date, publicly available inventory and assessment of its tourism assets and attractions, including natural and cultural sites.						
A.6.i	The destination has an inventory and assessment of its tourism assets and attractions.						
A.6.ii	The inventory and assessment include natural and cultural sites.						
A.6.iii	The inventory and assessment are publicly available.						
A.6.iv	The inventory and assessment are up-to-date.						
A.7	Planning Regulations The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies that require environmental, economic, and social impact assessment and integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. The guidelines, regulations and/or policies are designed to protect natural and cultural resources, were created with local inputs from the public and a thorough review process, are publicly communicated, and are enforced.						
A.7.i	The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies that are designed to protect natural and cultural resources.						
A.7.ii	The guidelines, regulations and/or policies require:						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	c) environmental, economic, and social impact assessment and d) integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition.						
A.7.iii	The guidelines, regulations and/or policies: d) were created with local inputs from the public, e) underwent a thorough review process, and f) are publicly communicated.						
A.7.iv	The guidelines, regulations and/or policies are enforced.						
A.8	Access for all Where appropriate, sites and facilities, including those of natural and cultural importance, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements. Where such sites and facilities are not immediately accessible, access is afforded through the design and implementation of solutions that take into account both the integrity of the site and such reasonable accommodations for persons with access requirements as can be achieved.						
A.8.i	Where appropriate, sites and facilities, including those of natural and cultural importance, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and others who						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	have specific access requirements.						
A.8.ii	Where such sites and facilities are not immediately accessible, access is afforded through the design and implementation of solutions that take into account both the integrity of the site and such reasonable accommodations for persons with access requirements as can be achieved.						
A.9	Property acquisitions Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions exist, are enforced, comply with communal and indigenous rights, ensure public consultation, and do not authorize resettlement without prior informed consent and/or reasonable compensation.						
A.9.i	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions exist.						
A.9.ii	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions are enforced.						
A.9.iii	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions comply with communal and indigenous rights.						
A.9.iv	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions ensure public consultation.						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
A.9.v	Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions do not authorize resettlement without prior informed consent and/or reasonable compensation.						
A.10	Visitor satisfaction The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report visitor satisfaction, and, if necessary, to take action to improve visitor satisfaction.						
A.10.i	The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report visitor satisfaction,						
A.10.ii	The destination has a system to take action to improve visitor satisfaction when necessary.						
A.11	Sustainability standards The destination has a system to promote sustainability standards for enterprises consistent with the GSTC Criteria. The destination makes publicly available a list of sustainability certified or verified enterprises						
A.11.i	The destination has a system to promote sustainability standards for enterprises consistent with the GSTC Criteria.						
A.11.ii	The destination makes publicly available a list of sustainability certified or verified enterprises						
A.12	Safety and security The destination has a system to monitor, prevent, publicly report, and respond to crime, safety, and health hazards.						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
A.12.i	The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report crime, safety, and health hazards.						
A.12.ii	The destination has a system to prevent and respond to crime, safety, and health hazards.						
A.13	Crisis and emergency management The destination has a crisis and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination. Key elements are communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises. The plan establishes procedures and provides resources and training for staff, visitors, and residents, and is updated on a regular basis.						
A.13.i	The destination has a crisis and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination, and is updated on a regular basis.						
A.13.ii	Key elements of the plan are communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises						
A.13.iii	The plan establishes procedures and provides resources and training for staff, visitors, and residents.						
A.14	Promotion Promotion is accurate with regard to the destination and its products, services, and sustainability claims. The promotional messages treat local communities and tourists authentically and respectfully.						
A.14.i	Promotion is accurate with regard to the destination and its products, services, and sustainability claims.						
A.14.ii	The promotional messages treat						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	local communities authentically and respectfully.						
A.14.iii	The promotional messages treat local tourists respectfully.						
B. Maximize social and economic benefits to the host community and minimize negative impacts.							
B.1.	Economic monitoring The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is monitored and publicly reported at least annually. To the extent feasible, this should include visitor expenditure, revenue per available room, employment and investment data.						
B.1.i	The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is monitored.						
B.1.ii	The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is publicly reported at least annually.						
B.1.iii	Reporting of the direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy should include visitor expenditure, revenue per available room, employment, and investment data.						
B.2	Local career opportunities The destination's enterprises provide equal employment, training opportunities, occupational safety, and fair wages for all.						
B.2.i	The destination's enterprises provide equal employment opportunities and fair wages for all.						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
B.2.ii	The destination's enterprises provide equal training opportunities for all.						
B.2.iii	The destination's enterprises ensure occupational safety for all.						
B.3	Public participation The destination has a system that encourages public participation in destination planning and decision making on an ongoing basis.						
B.3.i	The destination has a system that encourages public participation in destination planning and decision making on an ongoing basis.						
B.4	Local community opinion Local communities' aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with destination management are regularly monitored, recorded and publicly reported in a timely manner.						
B.4.i	Local communities' aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with destination management are: d) regularly monitored, e) recorded, and f) publicly reported in a timely manner.						
B.5	Local access The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary rehabilitates or restores local community access to natural and cultural sites.						
B.5.i	The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary rehabilitates or						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	restores local community access to natural and cultural sites						
B.6	Tourism awareness and education The destination provides regular programs to affected communities to enhance their understanding of the opportunities and challenges of tourism, and the importance of sustainability.						
B.6.i	The destination provides regular programs to affected communities to enhance their understanding of the opportunities and challenges of tourism.						
B.6.ii	The destination provides regular programs to affected communities to enhance their understanding of the importance of sustainability.						
B.7	Preventing exploitation The destination has laws and established practices to prevent commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation and harassment of anyone, particularly of children, adolescents, women, and minorities. The laws and established practices are publicly communicated.						
B.7.i	The destination has laws and established practices to prevent g) commercial, h) sexual, or i) any other form of exploitation and harassment of anyone, particularly of j) children, adolescents,						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	k) women, and l) minorities.						
B.7.ii	The laws and established practices are publicly communicated.						
B.8	Support for community The destination has a system to enable and encourage enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives.						
B.8.i	The destination has a system to enable and encourage enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives.						
B.9	Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade The destination has a system that supports local and small- and medium-sized enterprises, and promotes and develops local sustainable products and fair trade principles that are based on the area's nature and culture. These may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.						
B.9.i	The destination has a system that supports local and small- and medium-sized enterprises.						
B.9.ii	The destination has a system that promotes and develops local sustainable products and fair trade principles that are based on the area's nature and culture. These may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.						
C. Maximize benefits to communities, visitors, and culture; minimize negative impacts.							

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
C.1	Attraction protection The destination has a policy and system to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve natural and cultural sites, including built heritage (historic and archaeological) and rural and urban scenic views.						
C.1.i	The destination has a policy and system to d) evaluate, e) rehabilitate, and f) conserve natural and cultural sites, including built heritage (historic and archaeological) and rural and urban scenic views.						
C.2	Visitor management The destination has a visitor management system for attraction sites that includes measures to preserve, protect, and enhance natural and cultural assets.						
C.2.i	The destination has a visitor management system for attraction sites that includes measures to preserve, protect, and enhance natural and cultural assets.						
C.3	Visitor behavior The destination has published and provided guidelines for proper visitor behavior at sensitive sites. Such guidelines are designed to minimize adverse impacts on sensitive sites and strengthen positive visitor behaviors.						
C.3.i	The destination has published and provided guidelines for proper visitor behavior at sensitive sites.						
C.3.ii	The guidelines are designed to: g) minimize adverse						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	impacts on sensitive sites and h) strengthen positive visitor behaviors.						
C.4	Cultural heritage protection The destination has laws governing the proper sale, trade, display, or gifting of historical and archaeological artefacts.						
C.4.i	The destination has laws governing the proper: a) sale, b) trade, c) display, or d) gifting of historical and archaeological artefacts.						
C.5	Site interpretation Accurate interpretive information is provided at natural and cultural sites. The information is culturally appropriate, developed with community collaboration, and communicated in languages pertinent to visitors.						
C.5.1	Accurate interpretive information is provided at natural and cultural sites. The information is d) culturally appropriate e) developed with community collaboration, and communicated in languages						
C.6	Intellectual property The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals.						
C.6.i	The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria a ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	property rights of communities and individuals.						
D. Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts							
D.1	Environmental risks The destination has identified environmental risks and has a system in place to address them.						
D.1.i	The destination has identified environmental risks.						
D.1.ii	The destination has a system in place to address environmental risks.						
D.2	Protection of sensitive environments The destination has a system to monitor the environmental impact of tourism, conserve habitats, species, and ecosystems, and prevent the introduction of invasive species.						
D.2.i	The destination has a system to monitor the environmental impact of tourism.						
D.2.ii	The destination has a system to conserve habitats, species, and ecosystems.						
D.2.iii	The destination has a system to prevent the introduction of invasive species.						
D.3	Wildlife protection The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards for the harvest or capture, display, and sale of wildlife (including plants and animals).						
D.3.i	The destination has a system to ensure compliance with: g) local, h) national, and i) international laws and standards for the: j) harvest or capture,						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	k) display, and l) sale of wildlife (including plants and animals).						
D.4	Greenhouse gas emissions The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, minimize, publicly report, and mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including emissions from service providers).						
D.4.i	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to: d) measure e) monitor, and f) publicly report their greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including emissions from service providers).						
D.4.ii	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to: c) minimize and d) mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including emissions from service providers).						
D.5	Energy conservation The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report energy consumption, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.						
D.5.i	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to d) measure						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	e) ' monitor, and f) publicly report energy consumption.						
D.5.ii	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce energy consumption.						
D.5.iii	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.						
D.6	Water Management The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report water usage.						
D.6.i	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to d) measure e) ' monitor, and f) publicly report water usage.						
D.6.ii	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce water usage						
D.7	Water security The destination has a system to monitor its water resources to ensure that use by enterprises is compatible with the water requirements of the destination community.						
D.7.i	The destination has a system to monitor its water resources.						
D.7.ii	The destination has a system to ensure that the use of water resources by						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria a ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	enterprises is compatible with the water requirements of the destination community.						
D.8	Water quality The destination has a system to monitor drinking and recreational water quality using quality standards. The monitoring results are publicly available, and the destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues.						
D.8.i	The destination has a system to monitor drinking and recreational water quality using quality standards.						
D.8.ii	The monitoring results are publicly available.						
D.8.iii	The destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues.						
D.9	Wastewater The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems, and ensures wastes are properly treated and reused or released safely with minimal adverse effects to the local population and the environment.						
D.9.i	The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems.						
D.9.ii	The destination ensures that wastewater is properly treated.						
D.9.iii	The destination ensures that treated wastewater is						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	reused or released safely with minimal adverse effects to the local population and the environment.						
D.10	Solid waste reduction The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste. Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.						
D.10.i	The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste.						
D.10.ii	Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.						
D.11	Light and noise pollution The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution. The destination encourages enterprises to follow these guidelines and regulations.						
D.11.i	The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution.						
D.11.ii	The destination encourages enterprises to follow its guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution.						
D.12	Low-impact transportation The destination has a system to increase the use of low-impact transportation, including public transportation and active transportation (e.g., walking and cycling).						
D.12.i	The destination has a system to increase the use of low-impact transportation, including public transportation and active						

GSTC Benchmarking Criteria for Destinations		Destination standard to be tested for recognition of equivalence					GSTC internal use
		Criteria ID#	Full text of criteria	Required?	Clarifications	Justify differences	
	transportation (e.g., walking and cycling).						

Part III: GSTC Glossary of Relevant Terms

A full glossary of the terms used by the GSTC may be found at www.gstcouncil.org/resource-center/glossary.html. A glossary of the terms related to GSTC-Recognition, Approval, and accreditation is located at www.gstcouncil.org/resource-center/gstc-approval-process-for-standards-and-certification-programs/glossary-of-terms-gstc-recognition-approval-and-accreditation-terms-and-definitions.html.

For those terms not defined here, the hierarchy of definitions used is

- a) www.gstcouncil.org/resource-center/gstc-approval-process-for-standards-and-certification-programs/glossary-of-terms-gstc-recognition-approval-and-accreditation-terms-and-definitions.html
- b) www.gstcouncil.org/resource-center/glossary.html
- c) ISEAL Standards Setting Code version 5
- d) ISO/IEC 17065
- e) ISO/IEC 17067
- f) ISO/IEC 17011
- g) ISO/IEC 17000
- h) ISO Guide 2
- i) Standard English dictionaries

Levels of GSTC requirements	
‘will’	An entity commits to undertake the specified action
‘shall’	An entity must take the specified action to be in compliance
‘should’	An entity is expected to take the specified action
‘may’	An entity is allowed to take the specified action

Term	Definition
Accreditation	The process of approval by GSTC of a certification body’s competence to certify organisations to a GSTC recognised standard
Accreditation body	An independent entity that operates in conformity with the standard ISO/IEC 17011 and that is technically competent to accredit CBs to perform conformity assessment using a GSTC-recognized standard.
Audit	A systematic and comprehensive process of investigation through checking documents, conducting interviews, observation and other means
CB	See Certification Body or Conformity assessment body
Certification	Voluntary, third-party assessment, through an audit, of a tourism enterprise for conformity to a standard
Certification body	A body that verifies that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person or body are fulfilled.
Certification scheme	A specific, named programme of certification resulting in the granting of a certificate of conformity to a tourism enterprise by a CB along with the right to display a mark associated with the scheme. It is defined by ISO as “[the rules, procedures, and management for carrying out certification] related to specified [services], to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply.” <i>After draft ISO 17067</i>
Certification scheme owner	A person or other legal entity who owns the intellectual property associated with a sustainable tourism certification scheme

Term	Definition
Sustainable tourism standard	A set of rules and guidelines that define the requirements of tourism enterprises in delivering sustainable tourism. For GSTC recognition, the standard shall be equivalent to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria.
Standard owner	A person or other legal entity who owns the intellectual property associated with a sustainable tourism standard
Client	A tourism enterprise that purchases a certification service from a CB
Comparable standard	A standard that achieves the same outcomes as the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria's outcome by differing methods.
Conflict of interest	A situation where the capacity for objectivity of a person or body is at risk
Conformity Assessment	A process of checking and verifying the extent to which a tourism enterprise or certification scheme meets a specified standard and criteria
Consultancy	The provision, for a fee (directly or indirectly), of expertise to a tourism enterprise or CB on the design, management and operation of their services
Equivalent standard	A standard whose requirements have a direct correspondence with the requirements with the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria. The standard may have differing presentation, or even in substance, e.g. in providing guidance on how to meet requirements. Equivalency for purposes of GSTC Recognition includes harmonized, unified, identical, unilaterally-aligned, and comparable standards. (ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.8, and 6.9).
GSTC Accreditation	Accreditation provided by an accreditation body that is appointed by the GSTC.
GSTC requirements for CBs	The requirements that a CB shall meet in terms of its structure, management and operational procedures
GSTC Accreditation Panel	An independent body of the GSTC that is technically competent and impartial, that will make decisions on recognizing sustainable tourism standards and certification scheme owners, and may endorse accreditation body recommendations to accredit CBs.
GSTC Criteria	GSTC Criteria are a common understanding of sustainable tourism, and are the minimum that any tourism business should aspire to reach. They are organized around four main themes: effective sustainability planning; maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community; enhancing cultural heritage; and reducing negative impacts to the environment. Although the criteria are initially intended for use by the accommodation and tour operation sectors, they have applicability to the entire tourism industry.
GSTC Benchmarking Criteria	The minimum requirement of a tourism enterprise that can be recognized as fully complying with principles of sustainable tourism as identified by the GSTC and the GSTC Criteria.
GSTC-recognized standard	A sustainable tourism standard that has been evaluated by the GSTC as being equivalent to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria.
GTSC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
Impartiality	The ability to make judgements and take decisions that are objective, based strictly on facts and free from other influences
Non-conformity	The absence of, or failure to meet, an element of a standard or performance criteria
Third-party	Carried out by an individual or body that is independent of the entity being certified or accredited
Tourism enterprise	An entity providing one or more services to tourists.
Unilaterally aligned standard	A standard that is equivalent or comparable to the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria but contains further requirements not contained in the GSTC Benchmarking Criteria.