



## ***The Secretary-General***

Ref:SG/2012

Madrid, 2 August 2012

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the UNWTO Secretariat, I am pleased to hereby recommend the Safe Coastal Tourism association as a trustful project partner considering their aims and objectives of promoting the safety and wellbeing in coastal destinations as stated in the attached document.

This non-profit association has been established by the family and friends of a promising young man from Flanders - Belgium, Bavo Verheyden (21), who became a drowning victim on April 18th, 2011. He was accompanied by his older brother Bart, physician in Zeerust-Lehurutshe Hospital Complex, who nearly drowned on that same occasion.

UNWTO has been addressed by Ms Caroline Danneels and Ms Lieve Verheyden, founding members and members of the Board of Directors of the registered Non-Profit Association Safe Coastal Tourism. As a result, Ms Caroline Danneels has been invited to speak at the 11th meeting of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, coordinated by UNWTO (Rome, Italy, 12-13 July 2012). Ms Danneels provided the Committee an account of the dangers and risks that represent the lack of information on safety prevention and security precaution measures at many coastal destinations. The efforts of Safe Coastal Tourism to promote and advocate for safety precautions at beaches and marinas across the globe were publicly commended by the Committee, which recommended that facilitating accurate information to tourists in terms of safety of beaches and costal resorts should be a priority for destinations (see <http://media.unwto.org/en/press-release/2012-07-13/world-committee-tourism-ethics-calls-safe-coastal-tourism>).

For all above, we would appreciate your support to Safe Coastal Tourism.

Sincerely,

  
Taleb Rifai

**World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) - A Specialized Agency of the United Nations**

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**SAFE COASTAL TOURISM**  
**Non-Profit Association nr. 0844.745.581**  
**Flanders, Belgium**

**Preamble**

Each year an estimated 400,000 foreign as well as domestic tourists die by drowning in the sea. This is an unacceptable toll. Unlike the inhabitants of the coast, who are more familiar with the risks of the sea, tourists are mostly unaware of or underestimate the dangers of the sea.

The non-profit association was created after the son and friend of the founding members of Safe Coastal Tourism, Bavo Verheyden, died by drowning in South Africa while on holiday.

**Vision of the Organisation**

A world free of coastal tourism drowning.

**Mission of the Organisation**

Our Mission is to undertake all possible measures to avoid coastal tourism drowning, primarily in South Africa but also globally.

**Values of the Organisation**

We believe in humanitarian principles, effective governance, tolerance and respect for all, ethical conduct and behaviour, evidence based decisions and friendship.

**Strategic Goals**

**1. Build the capacity to reduce coastal drowning**

The overlapping between drowning prevention on the one hand, and tourism on the other hand, has hardly been explored. This part connects to the Code of Ethics for Tourism, which recommends that all tourist stakeholders should meet and develop prevention measures including safe coastal tourism, in South Africa as well as worldwide. In that respect dissemination of information on the risks of the ocean is a very important aim.

**2. Establish a Centre of Expertise**

The phenomenon of holiday drowning is an underestimated and under-researched topic. In this context the organisation intends to establish a Centre of Expertise by collecting and studying scientific research, exploring local initiatives worldwide and meeting experts in both the touristic and lifesaving domain. Such will allow more evidence-based practice at all levels. It also underpins and facilitates the foreseen lobby work, e.g. related to legislative bodies.

**3. Reduce coastal drowning through the dissemination of uniformed information**

Efficiency is reached when a correct message is frequently repeated on the journey from home to the holiday destination, including the beach. In this context the organisation will undertake all necessary steps to disseminate uniform information by all stakeholders, be it the tourism industry, the government and the private sector. The organisation will fight misleading and/or untruthful slogans to attract unaware tourists.

**4. Reduce coastal drowning through partnership and collaboration**

Safe Coastal Tourism will collaborate and work hand in glove with all organisations that can be relevant to reduce coastal drowning.