



## SAFE COASTAL TOURISM

Dear Mr. Rifai,

We are very grateful that we can have this meeting with you. The motive of our request to meet you, is the fact that my son is one of 8000 international tourists that get drowned every year. If we include domestic tourists, he is one of 400000 people who do not survive the sea by drowning.

And that's why we are here: generally speaking, the phenomenon of holiday drowning is a completely underestimated and under-researched topic.

We have been studying this phenomenon in depth and want to convey our insights to you. Since our search is not finished yet, we would also like to ask your help.

As far as our study is concerned, we first contacted the International Life Saving Federation (ILS), which is the world authority for drowning prevention and lifesaving. The organization supports and collaborates with national and international organizations engaged in drowning prevention, water safety, water rescue, lifesaving and lifeguarding, and counts about 150 member states .

According to ILS worldwide one foreign tourist per hour gets drowned in the sea because of ignorance or underestimation of the dangers of the sea, which amounts to the aforementioned 8000 foreign tourists per year.

We have also studied organizations in the touristic industry, such as travel agencies, but also embassies and ministries in Belgium and in South Africa, and last but not least the UNWTO. We read the Global Code of Ethics and we learned that the touristic industry is expected to take appropriate measures to ensure the health, safety and security of tourists. However, reading through all kinds of brochures, websites, etc , and repeating the long journey from Belgium to the South African beach where our son died, we noticed that "safety and security" is restricted to protecting the tourist against criminality. Physical or environmental risks, to which risks of the sea belong, do not feature in these texts, nor on the road.

We want to convey one principal insight with you:

The world of tourism and the world of lifesaving (prevention of drowning) **do hardly meet**.

- Because of a shortage of means, esp. in developing countries such as South Africa, ILS focuses on teaching children how to swim, and does not go into the issue of holiday drowning.
- The touristic sector on the other hand does not go into the risks of drowning. And we have discovered why. In South Africa and other developing countries, which have recently become fascinating destinations for tourists, the touristic industry, focusing on the economic advantages, fears that naming risks gives a negative impression of the destination.

I am convinced that you will agree with us, when we say that this fear and the consequential disinformation is not acceptable, since information makes the difference between life and death. Our organization "Safe Coastal Tourism" will continue its fight against the lack of prevention measures as far as physical or environmental risks are concerned.

We hope that you allow us to ask your help in three issues:

- First, may we kindly ask you to keep convincing the touristic industry that disinformation out of fear is unethical?
- Secondly, may we ask you whether you could provide our non-profit association with a letter of recommendation to strengthen the mission of our association?
- Thirdly, may we kindly ask you to put this issue on the agenda of the UNWTO? In that respect we would like to recommend you the Australian approach, which we have also studied in detail.

Dear sir, we thank you very much for your attention. For more information, we refer you to this file, which we have prepared for you, and which reflects our study and some of the initiatives we have taken.

Louvain, 13/3/2012