

## **Asian Ecotourism Network (AEN) Official Position as a regional network of Global Ecotourism Network Regarding: The International Tourism Collective (ITC) or The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)**

### **Antecedents:**

For many years culminating in the last official TIES Board Meeting at the ESTC2014 in Bonito, Brazil (April 2014), the TIES Advisory Board had been requesting information about financial obligations and other matters germane to their responsibilities as advisors to TIES. This information is essential to the transparent and ethical functioning of any organization. There were both known and unknown debts accrued from previous Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conferences (ESTCs) that needed to be analyzed via detailed financial reports and then acted upon.

Dr. Kelly Bricker (then Chair) and Mr. Jon Bruno (then Executive Committee), as representatives of the ITC, the holding corporation of TIES, had promised the Advisory Board a complete, final and comprehensive financial report to be delivered at the Board Meeting in 2014 in Brazil, yet instead, the Board only received a small general overview -with neither details nor verification.

Unfortunately, this lack of transparency was not an isolated instance. At board meetings, on conference calls and in emails, the Advisory Board has since 2009 repeatedly requested and had been promised detailed information about the operations, sustainability and financial health of TIES. As mentioned, the Advisory Board has never received this critical information.

As a result, in the absence of verified or detailed information regarding the organization's financial status, including any potential liabilities or risks, the alarmed Advisory Board communicated to Dr. Bricker and Mr. Bruno that the Advisory Board could no longer responsibly participate in or endorse the ESTC2015 planned for Ecuador.

Furthermore, based on the foregoing, including the ITC's resistance to providing information which we believe is essential for maintaining the reputation of its board members and officers, as well as the growth and sustainability of ecotourism, the entire Advisory Board, in 2015, resigned from TIES Advisory Board and formed the Global Ecotourism Network (GEN).

### **Lack of Transparency:**

To this day GEN has not seen any official communication from ITC/TIES about its present status, nor as far as we can discern from TIES website and social media, has the schism and resignation by the Advisory Board been communicated to the membership of TIES. Consequently, and rather consistently, members of the GEN Board of Directors have continued to receive numerous pleas and requests to act as intermediaries in petitions for payment of TIES debts, both small and large, that contracted TIES members claimed were owed to them for work



completed and according to these members, they were never paid, for event registration fees cancelled but never reimbursed and other financial anomalies. Unfortunately, GEN has neither data nor access to the financials and is not able to advise.

#### **Potential Financial Anomalies:**

In addition, it has come to our attention and based on the USA Internal Revenue System's website, that TIES tax exemption *has been revoked* for failure to file a Form 990 for three years in a row -a yearly requirement as a non profit 501(c)3 organization- and yet seems to be representing itself as such

Tax Status: <http://nonprofits.findthecompany.com/l/462929/International-Ecotourism-Society>

#### **Therefore:**

**The *Global Ecotourism Network Board of Directors* takes very seriously our responsibility as torch bearers for transparency and an ethical voice for the global ecotourism community. In 2015, all but Dr.Bricker announced our resignation from TIES and sent a public press release detailing the reasons for this action. Since 2016 the GEN website has carried a “due diligence” warning. As GEN has seen no change from TIES, except for the gradual reduction of on the TIES website of people who are responsible for the organization and based on the information listed above, we believe any involvement or participation with the ITC or TIES (as a holding of the ITC) to be risky and thus to be avoided.**

**The establishment of the Asian Ecotourism Network (AEN) in June 2015 as a regional network of GEN by four of the former TIES board members that reside in Asia was the consequence of these factors mentioned above. AEN shares the same values as GEN and has no involvement with any projects organized by or associated with TIES/ESTC which may be construed as a support for them and thus indirectly give them credibility. No one in the AEN board uses our office(s) in AEN to promote TIES/ESTC conference.**

By: The Global Ecotourism Network Board of Directors

29 July 2017

Excursus By: The Asian Ecotourism Network Board of Directors

29 August 2017

- **GEN diligence page** <https://www.globalecotourismnetwork.org/due-diligence>
- **TIES Council** <http://www.ecotourism.org/ties-research-and-education-council>
- **TIES team** <http://www.ecotourism.org/management-and-program-team> (2009/2010)
- **TIES Annual Report; 2009/2010** <http://www.ecotourism.org/annual-reports>
- **Tax Status** <https://goo.gl/vn9t55>