

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: IS IT JUST A PIPEDREAM?

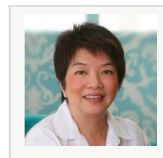
In 2013, we were invited as ECHOstore to a Sustainable Tourism Training Program in Coron, Palawan. There was a project called *The Coron Initiative* because eco advocates did not want Coron to follow the sad state of Boracay. News has it that Boracay is even worse now, with increasing developments in infrastructure but decreasing concern for the sustainability of the premier tourist destination.



Coron

This year, Susan Santos de Cardenas, author and adviser of an earlier *The Boracay Initiative* in 2010, is back in the Philippines to hold a Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) forum in—BORACAY! The timing is great for this forum as Boracay has been hitting the headlines after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was given an ultimatum by no less that President Duterte himself. **Fix it or close it.** That seems to be the standing order.

Chit U. Juan
Green Lane



PROFILE



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Boracay (Photo from Wikimedia Commons)

After hearing the news, I even had to ask Susan if the forum would push through. She said it will happen on March 15-16, 2018 at the Ecovillage Resort, with international speakers from GSTC gracing the event.



From its inception, Mayakoba was conceived as a resort development like no other. The design was to follow the contours of the existing geography . . . to enhance, not replace, the natural environment . . . Architects were joined by biologists, geologists and engineers to map out a way to find separate but connected locations for the planned development. The result was a Master Planned retreat which now welcomes visitors and residents from the four corners of the Earth to a triumph of conservation. The Director of Voluntarios Mayakoba will share the best practices of Sustainable resort & city development. (Photos from their Facebook account)

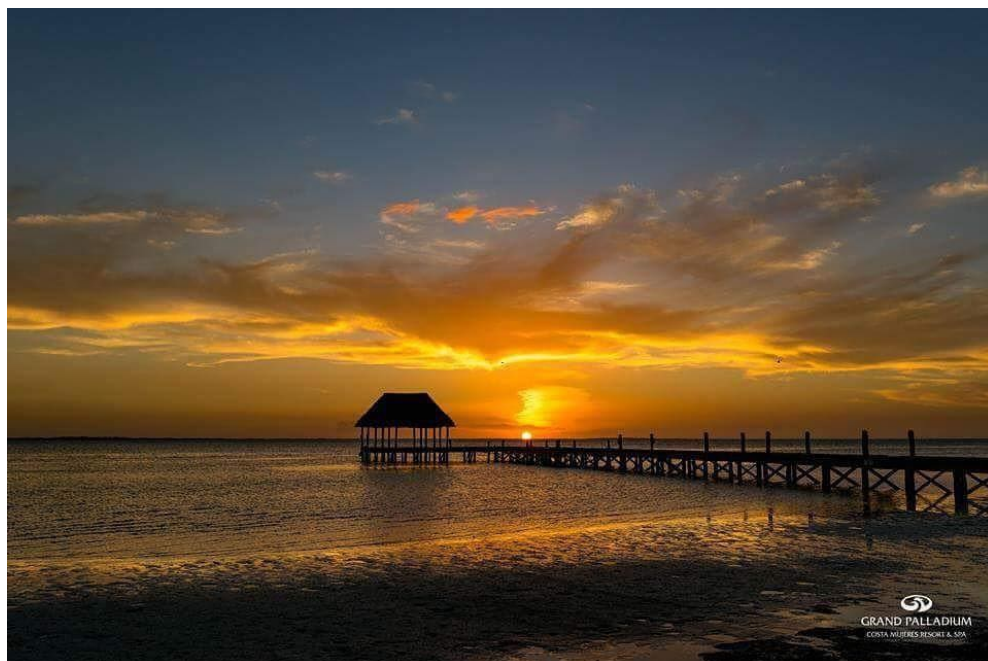




All international sustainable tourism experts and speakers will fly themselves in. They will support the advocacy of cleaning up Boracay and invite LGUs, tourist businesses, and everyone else who make a living from tourism. Let's all be on the same page, as they say.



Another astounding resort development with conservation at its core is Grand Palladium Resorts & Spa, with over 200 hectares of mangrove and lowland forest, only 13% of the property is built up. (Photos from their IG account)



At the heels of the President's "fix or close" order, it is timely that international experts will come and share what we can do together to save our tourist destinations like Coron, Siargao, Malapascua, Camiguin and the rest of our 7,000 islands.

I was again asked by Susan to talk about Sustainable Production and Consumption (one of the UN SDGs and GSTC Standards) and how ECHOstore has the 10-year old example of **Slow Food** principles of serving and selling good, clean, and fair food; and how we promote "Farm to table" principles to chefs and sourcing locally to promote Locavorism. Yes, there are too many buzzwords: slow food, sustainable, farm to table, nose to tail, and locavorism. But more than knowing the meaning of buzzwords must be the doing.

I was also invited to Boracay some three years ago in a hotel in Station 2 where I, again, was to promote Sustainability. Alas, in the very hotel where we held the forum, they used sachets of white sugar in the coffee shop, they had us speak in an air-conditioned hall, and finally we were served lunch that was probably imported from another island (I think it was chicken *inasa* with sachets of ketchup or sauce),

white rice, and soft drinks. Talk about not walking the talk! I think the hotel was not mindful of the subject of the conference. Serve whole foods, scrimp on sachet, and put sugar and creamer bowls for less trash, etc. The breakfast was also all processed food like hotdog and meatloaf which the Korean guests happily lapped up.

I visited a hotel in Legaspi and the same experience greeted me. White bread, instant coffee in sachets, and hardly any choice of whole foods. We need not be expensive, just creative and choosing local. Bananas, pineapple, cantaloupe, and papaya are local fruits.

Vegetables can also be locally-sourced as what we advised Al Linsangan in Coron where the soil is not suitable. Follow Bohol Bee Farm's way of planting on elevated racks of healthy soil. It can be done and we have seen the good examples in Bohol, a green café in Legaspi and in Boracay. I still have to see a resort sourcing locally and sustainably.



March 15 - 16, 2018
Boracay Ecovillage Resort and Convention Center
Boracay Island, Malay, Aklan, Philippines

GSTC - THE PHILIPPINES NATIONAL FORUM

Global Sustainable Tourism Standards & Development

As a leader in the global effort to make travel and tourism more sustainable, GSTC executes forums that address the most critical issues of the day in sustainable tourism with global thought-leaders. The forum seeks to synthesize best practices from the public and private sectors and drawing from academic research and the practical experiences of experts in tourism development and promotion.

Endorsed by the United Nations, Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) plays an important role as a global leader in providing guidance for sustainable tourism development and management. To ensure its long-term success in the Philippines, GSTC aims to support the sustainable destination development in the country and help implement tangible actions that fulfill the globally recognized standards of sustainability best practices for destinations and the tourism industry.

OUR SPEAKERS

 Randy Durband Chief Executive Officer GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL USA	 Susan Santos Cárdenas CEO & President - GSTC GSTC - Philippines Representative	 Beatriz Barreal Founder, CEO & President SUSTAINABLE RIVIERA MAYA MEXICO	 Arturo Ameza Founder DIRECCIÓN ARQUITECTÓNICA SC MEXICO
 Masaru Takayama Founder & Chair ASIAN ECOTOURISM NETWORK JAPAN	 Alfonso Lopez-Bello CSF Director Mayakoba MEXICO	 Vico Sotto Sustainable Tourism & Good Governance Advocate LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT, PASIG CITY PHILIPPINES	 Dr. AA Yapinchay Director MARINE WILDLIFE WATCH OF THE PHILIPPINES PHILIPPINES
 Pacita U. Juan Co-Founder ECHO STORE PHILIPPINES			

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

- Key Officials and Regional Directors - DOT, DENR, DILG and other related agencies
 - LGU's of Philippines' top tourism destinations
- Travel and Tourism Industry Leaders - Travel Agencies, Tour Operators, Hospitality, Airlines Sector
- Entrepreneurs - Eco/Organic product providers, Leisure and Health Business-owners
 - Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)
- Academe, Youth Leaders and other environment and green advocates

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I am so looking forward to see Boracay again in a few weeks when we hold the GSTC National Forum. I believe it is open to all who are interested not only to save our islands from disrepair and irreversible damage but also, mostly to **emerging destinations** that need to avoid the pitfalls of unsustainable development. I am excited and a little worried about what I will see there but my hopes are high because the government has spoken—fix it or close it. Now, what if instead of doing repairs, we start by planning ahead—with the ethos of global sustainable tourism standards.

The actors: Susan, the staunch advocate; the Department of Tourism through Usec. Alma Jimenez; the LGUs who will support; and hopefully the Department of Environment and Natural Resources can listen in on the conversation as well. And hopefully, you!

Join us in coming together for one goal—to keep our islands as pristine as we found them and emulate the likes of Inkaterra in Peru, international beach destinations like Riviera Maya in Mexico, and emerging destinations in the Philippines who try to be green like Lake Sebu.



Lake Sebu (Photo from TripAdvisor)

If we cannot have this mindset, I guess we just have to take another route like what the President said: **Close it.** And that's the saddest thing that could happen.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) The Philippines National Forum will be held on March 15-16, 2018 at Boracay Eco Village Resort and Convention Center in Malay, Aklan. Register [HERE](#).