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Excursion business in the context of sustainable tourism development

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Abstract

The article examines the role of excursion activities in the development of sustainable tourism as an important area of the modern tourism industry. Sustainable tourism, which is guided by the principles of environmental responsibility, social inclusion and economic sustainability, is aimed at preserving natural and cultural resources and ensuring the long-term development of local communities. Excursion business, as one of the main components of tourism services, has a significant potential for implementing sustainable tourism ideas due to the possibility of direct influence on the minds of tourists, promotion of cultural heritage and support for the local economy.

In addition, sightseeing is a powerful tool for introducing tourists to the cultural heritage of the region. Excursions focusing on cultural, historical and ethnographic aspects contribute to the preservation of local traditions and increase the attractiveness of the territories for tourists. The positive impact of excursions on the region's economy is also considered: excursion activities stimulate demand for local products, crafts and services,

which in turn contributes to the development of small businesses, the creation of new jobs and the strengthening of economic resilience of communities.

The article highlights the main challenges facing the excursion business in the context of sustainable tourism. In particular, the article discusses the need to improve the professional level of guides in the field of sustainable development, adaptation of excursion programmes to the requirements of environmental standards and active involvement of local communities in tourism activities. The importance of cooperation between government, business and local organisations to ensure the sustainable development of tourist regions.

Thus, the excursion business, focused on the principles of sustainable development, has a significant potential for preserving natural and cultural heritage, ensuring economic growth and improving the quality of life of the local population.

Keywords: excursion activity; role of guides; sustainable tourism; local communities; tourist flows; cultural heritage; innovative technologies in tourism.

Анотація

У статті досліджується роль екскурсійної діяльності у розвитку сталого туризму як важливого напрямку сучасної туристичної індустрії. Сталий туризм, що орієнтується на принципи екологічної відповідальності, соціальної інтеграції та економічної стійкості, спрямований на збереження природних та культурних ресурсів і забезпечення довгострокового розвитку місцевих громад. Екскурсійна справа, як одна з основних складових туристичних послуг, має значний потенціал для реалізації ідей сталого туризму завдяки можливості безпосереднього впливу на свідомість туристів, популяризації культурної спадщини та підтримки місцевої економіки.

Крім того, екскурсійна діяльність є потужним інструментом для ознайомлення туристів із культурною спадщиною регіону. Екскурсії, що фокусуються на культурних, історичних і етнографічних аспектах, сприяють збереженню місцевих традицій та підвищують привабливість територій для туристів. Окремо розглянуто позитивний вплив екскурсій на економіку регіону: екскурсійна діяльність стимулює попит на локальні продукти, ремесла і послуги, що, в свою чергу, сприяє розвитку малого бізнесу, створенню нових робочих місць і зміцненню економічної стійкості громад.

У статті виділено основні виклики, що постають перед екскурсійною справою у контексті сталого туризму. Зокрема, обговорюється необхідність підвищення професійного рівня екскурсіводів у питаннях сталого розвитку, адаптація екскурсійних програм до вимог екологічних стандартів та активне залучення місцевих громад у

туристичну діяльність. Важливість співпраці між владою, бізнесом та місцевими організаціями для забезпечення сталого розвитку туристичних регіонів.

Таким чином, екскурсійна справа, орієнтована на принципи сталого розвитку, має вагомий потенціал для збереження природної і культурної спадщини, забезпечення економічного зростання та підвищення якості життя місцевого населення.

Ключові слова: екскурсійна діяльність; роль екскурсоводів; сталий туризм; місцеві громади; туристичні потоки; культурна спадщина; інноваційні технології в туризмі.

Statement of the problem. Sustainable tourism development is one of the key concepts of the modern tourism industry, aimed at preserving the natural and cultural environment while providing economic benefits to local communities. However, sightseeing, which occupies a significant place in tourism, often does not take into account the principles of sustainability, which leads to excessive pressure on ecosystems, degradation of cultural heritage and insufficient economic benefits for regions. The problem lies in the need to develop approaches to organising excursion activities that would reduce the negative impact on the environment, maintain cultural authenticity and ensure stable socio-economic development of communities [9].

Despite the growing interest in sustainable tourism, the sightseeing industry often fails to take into account the principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability, which leads to negative consequences for the natural environment and cultural heritage. Mass tourism can put excessive pressure on ecosystems, cause pollution, and lead to the loss of authenticity of cultural values that are of primary interest to tourists.

In addition, the lack of involvement of local communities in the development of excursion programmes prevents them from receiving economic benefits from tourism activities, which undermines social justice and sustainability. In this regard, there is an urgent need to create and implement models of excursion activities that would ensure a balance between the interests of tourists, the needs of local communities and the preservation of natural and cultural resources.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Recent studies in the field of excursion business and sustainable tourism in Ukraine demonstrate the intensification of scientific developments in this area. Thus, N. A. Beigulova considers the environmental aspects of excursion activities, emphasising the importance of introducing environmentally friendly practices to reduce the negative impact on the environment [1]. Kovalenko V. O.

focuses on the role of guides in shaping the environmental awareness of tourists, which is critical for the development of sustainable tourism [2]. Semenova O. V. analyses innovative approaches to sightseeing routes that integrate cultural and natural values, which contributes to the preservation of local authenticity [3]. The study by M. Sereda examines the economic benefits of sustainable tourism for local communities, emphasising the importance of involving local people in the organisation of tourism services [5]. The work of Kuzmenko A. V. explores the technologies of digitalisation of excursion services that can improve the accessibility and attractiveness of tourism products [4]. The analysis of these publications shows the growing attention to the integration of sustainable development principles into excursion activities in Ukraine.

Several key aspects of the overall problem of sustainable tourism development in Ukraine can be identified as unresolved. More coherent strategies for sustainable tourism development that would bring together all stakeholders, including local communities, government organisations and businesses. This leads to fragmentation of approaches and inefficient use of resources. Limited involvement of local communities. Local communities are often not involved in the planning and implementation of excursion programmes, which leads to insufficient consideration of their needs and interests, as well as to the loss of economic benefits. The impact of war on excursion activities. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of the tourism sector, and the lack of clear strategies for adapting to the new conditions leaves many questions unanswered. The need to integrate technologies. The issue of integrating the latest technologies, such as the digitalisation of sightseeing services and the use of information systems to improve the availability and quality of tourism products, remains unresolved. These unresolved aspects indicate the need for further research and development in the field of sustainable tourism, which will allow for more effective implementation of the principles of sustainable development in excursion activities.

Formulation of the objectives of the article (statement of the task). The article is aimed at analysing the theoretical aspects of sustainable tourism and excursion business, assessing the current state of the industry in Ukraine and defining the role of guides in shaping the environmental awareness of tourists. It also provides for the development of practical recommendations for the implementation of sustainable practices in excursion activities and the formulation of development strategies.

Summary of the main research material. Sustainable tourism is defined as a form of tourism that ensures the preservation of natural, cultural and social resources for future generations while meeting the needs of current tourists [1; 6; 7; 11]. This concept implies a

balance between economic benefits, environmental sustainability and social justice, which is critically important in the context of the excursion business.

The excursion business in Ukraine is currently facing a number of challenges, including the socio-economic situation, the impact of the war, growing attention to sustainable tourism and growing interest in domestic tourism, insufficient environmental education and involvement of local communities [2; 10; 12]. Studies show that most excursion programmes do not take into account the principles of sustainable development, which leads to a negative impact on the environment and cultural heritage [3].

The war in Ukraine has had a negative impact on all areas of tourism, including sightseeing. The number of foreign tourists has significantly decreased. Insecurity and instability have become the main factors restraining tourist flows. Infrastructure damage, especially in the eastern and southern regions, has generally made it more difficult to conduct tours, which in turn has affected the operations of travel companies. As outbound tourism suffered significant losses, domestic tourism has become a new trend. Many Ukrainians have started to discover their own country, which has led to an increase in demand for excursions to places of historical and natural significance. New excursion routes have emerged, focusing on local culture, natural resources and traditions that were previously underestimated.

Sustainable tourism is becoming increasingly important today. Tourists are becoming more aware of environmental issues and often look for eco-friendly routes and practices that support sustainable development. Tour companies are starting to offer programmes that focus on environmental protection, conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage.

The sightseeing infrastructure in Ukraine needs to be updated. Hotels, vehicles and sightseeing facilities need to be modernised to improve the quality of tourist services. The use of online platforms for selling tours and booking services has become more popular, which helps to attract a new audience. Guides play an important role in shaping the tourist experience. Guides need to continuously improve their knowledge and skills, particularly in the areas of ecology, history and culture, to be competitive in the market. In times of war and instability, guides can adapt their programmes to offer new topics related to modern history and the challenges faced by the country.

The current state of excursion business in Ukraine has both challenges and opportunities for development. Investments need to be attracted to restore and modernise the excursion infrastructure, which can help to restore the tourism industry. Cooperation with international tourism organisations can help Ukraine restore its reputation in the international market.

The current state of excursion business in Ukraine is characterised by adaptation to new conditions caused by the war and changes in society. Despite the challenges, there is potential for the development of domestic tourism, sustainable practices and new excursion products, which can contribute to the recovery of the industry and strengthen environmental awareness among the population.

The development of new thematic excursion products that meet the interests of modern tourists can increase the attractiveness of Ukraine as a tourist destination.

Guides play a key role in shaping the environmental awareness of tourists, as they are the first point of contact between visitors and cultural and natural resources. According to a study conducted by Semenova, guides with a high level of environmental education can significantly influence the attitude of tourists towards environmental issues [3].

Tour guides have the opportunity to cover environmental topics during their tours. Presenting information about natural ecosystems: They can explain how different ecosystems function, their importance to humanity, and the risks that threaten these systems, such as pollution, climate change, and species loss. During tours, guides can raise the issues of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss by providing tourists with information about local initiatives related to environmental protection. They can recommend sustainability practices such as the use of reusable bottles, waste sorting and responsible use of natural resources.

Guides have a unique opportunity to create an emotional connection between tourists and nature. By using visuals, sound and sensory experiences, guides can help tourists experience the beauty and uniqueness of natural sites, which stimulates a desire to conserve them. Guides can share stories about how local communities have interacted with nature over the centuries, which helps tourists understand the importance of nature in their lives.

Tour guides can be role models. By demonstrating their own environmental awareness, they can influence tourist behaviour by encouraging them to adopt sustainable practices when travelling. Guides can organise activities aimed at improving the environmental situation, such as cleaning up areas, planting trees or participating in environmental protection programmes.

Tour guides can act as intermediaries between tourists and local communities, promoting environmental awareness in both directions: by disseminating local initiatives, they can introduce tourists to local projects related to environmental protection, involving them in participation. Feedback, they can provide local communities with the opinions and impressions of tourists, which can help improve environmental practices in the region.

Modern technologies can significantly increase the effectiveness of guides in shaping environmental awareness. Use of apps for conducting environmental tours that provide real-time information about vegetation, wildlife and environmental issues. Using VR to visualise environmental issues, such as species extinction or pollution, can significantly increase tourist awareness.

Guides should constantly improve their knowledge and skills in the field of ecology and sustainable development. Participation in courses and seminars on environmental education, sustainable tourism and new environmental practices allows guides to keep up to date with the latest trends.

Interaction with colleagues from other regions or countries can help to introduce new ideas and approaches to environmental awareness. Tour guides are important agents of change in shaping environmental awareness among both tourists and local communities. Their ability to highlight environmental issues, create an emotional connection with nature, and demonstrate examples of responsible behaviour can have a significant impact on changing people's minds. Developing their skills and using new technologies will help make touring a more sustainable and environmentally conscious process.

The involvement of local communities in the organisation of excursion services is an important aspect of sustainable tourism development. Kuzmenko's research shows that active participation of the local population not only contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage, but also provides economic benefits for the regions, increasing their sustainability. Local communities can enter into partnerships with tourism companies to develop joint excursion programmes.

Such partnerships allow for the pooling of resources and knowledge, which increases the quality of services and economic benefits. Civil society organisations can initiate projects that promote local traditions, cuisine and crafts. Holding festivals, fairs and workshops creates an attraction for tourists and provides employment for local residents. Locals with in-depth knowledge of the region's culture and history can become tour guides. This not only provides a unique experience for tourists, but also supports local traditions and history [4].

The participation of local communities in tourism helps to create new jobs in the service sector, the hotel business and excursion activities. This, in turn, helps to improve the economic situation in the region. Tourists visiting the region consume local products, which stimulates the development of agricultural companies, restaurants and shops offering authentic goods. Successful excursion programmes can attract investors to the region, which helps to develop infrastructure and improve the quality of services.

Involvement of local communities in sightseeing activities helps to preserve and promote traditional crafts, holidays and cultural practices, which in turn preserves the region's identity. Local communities, by attracting tourists to natural resources, can conduct educational programmes on environmental protection, which increases the responsibility of both tourists and local residents. Local people working together in the tourism sector can improve the image of a region by creating an impression of openness and hospitality.

Local communities often face challenges of insufficient training or resources to effectively manage tourist flows. The involvement of local residents can cause conflicts with existing tourism companies, which may feel threatened by new market entrants. Mismanagement of tourism can lead to the commercialisation of culture and the depletion of natural resources, which can damage local identity and the environment.

For example, projects supported by international organisations such as UNESCO that help communities preserve their cultural heritage and develop ecotourism. In many regions of Ukraine, such as the Carpathians or Polissya, local communities are successfully implementing rural green tourism projects that include elements of agritourism and ecotourism.

The participation of local communities in sightseeing activities is an important factor in the development of sustainable tourism. Involving local people in managing tourist flows, creating joint projects and initiatives, and supporting local culture and traditions can significantly improve the quality of excursion services and provide economic benefits to the region. However, for these initiatives to be successful, it is important to overcome challenges and provide adequate support and training for local communities.

The impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on sightseeing is felt both in the short and long term, changing the structure, volume and nature of tourist flows. Let's look at the key aspects of this impact below. The outbreak of war has led to a significant decline in the number of tourists visiting Ukraine. Investors and tourists have become more cautious in choosing their travel destinations as security has become a priority. As a result, many tour companies suffered financial losses, closed down or reduced their services.

During the war, excursion activities became less focused on mass tourism. Instead of traditional routes that included popular tourist attractions, more attention was paid to domestic tourism and alternative forms of recreation. Cultural tourism, a growing interest in local traditions, history, culture and architecture. Excursions focusing on local traditions, cultural events and crafts are becoming more popular. Agritourism. There is a growing demand for

agritourism programmes where tourists can take part in agricultural work, learn traditional crafts and taste local dishes.

The war has also resulted in the destruction of infrastructure in many regions, especially in the eastern regions of Ukraine. This includes not only physical facilities such as hotels and museums, but also transport links. Damage to roads, bridges and railway connections has made it difficult for tourists to move around and affected the accessibility of sightseeing routes.

Guides in Ukraine have also undergone changes in their activities. Many of them have begun to adapt their programmes, offering tours that highlight the contemporary realities of war, national identity and cultural heritage. These tours may include visits to war-related monuments, memorials to the fallen, and sites that reflect historical events. The war has also affected the psychological state of potential tourists. Many people have become more cautious in their travel decisions due to war-related experiences and uncertainty. This may lead to a decrease in interest in travelling even after the situation in the country stabilises.

International organisations can support the restoration of excursion infrastructure and the promotion of tourism products on the international market. The importance of creating new routes. There is an opportunity to develop new, alternative tourist routes that offer a unique experience and introduce tourists to the country's contemporary realities. The involvement of local communities in this process is key, as they can provide authentic experiences and play an active role in revitalising the country's excursion industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the tourism sector, exposing its vulnerability to global crises. A study conducted by Kovalenko (2021) notes that many tour companies were not ready for the changes, which required adapting programmes to new realities. This opens up new opportunities for the introduction of digital technologies in the field of excursions.

Modern technologies and innovations in the tour business can significantly improve the quality of tour services. In particular, the use of mobile applications and virtual reality can make tours more interactive and accessible to a wider range of tourists. It can also help to preserve cultural heritage through digital platforms, which allows for the preservation of information about unique sites. In this context, let's look at some key technological solutions and innovative practices that can transform sightseeing activities [4].

Mobile apps are becoming an integral part of the travel experience. They enable tourists to: plan trips; create customised itineraries, including recommendations for places to visit, restaurants and entertainment venues. Receive real-time information: tourists can

receive up-to-date information on weather, events, promotions and offers, allowing them to adapt their plans during the trip. Interact with tour guides: apps can include chat functions with tour guides, allowing tourists to get answers to questions and recommendations during excursions.

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) create new opportunities for sightseeing: Interactive tours: The use of VR allows for virtual tours, which is especially relevant for popular sites where physical activity can be significant. It also reduces the risk of overcrowding in certain areas. Augmented experiences: AR technologies can be used to add layers of information to the real world. For example, tourists can point their smartphones at historical monuments and get detailed information about them. The introduction of eco-friendly technologies in the sightseeing industry is an important element of sustainable development. The use of electric buses, bicycles and scooters for tours helps to reduce CO₂ emissions and noise pollution. Introduce technologies to monitor the environmental condition of the places visited. This may include sensors to measure air and water quality, as well as systems to control tourist flows.

Data collection and analysis can significantly improve the management of excursion activities. Using analytics to study tourist preferences, which allows you to create personalised offers and improve the quality of service. Data analytics can help manage resources, including planning excursion flows, which reduces the burden on popular tourist routes.

Modern platforms and social media are becoming important tools for promoting excursion activities. Use social media to advertise tours and attract new tourists. This includes creating visual content, success stories, reviews and recommendations. Tourists can share their experiences, which helps to build a positive image and attract new customers.

New teaching methods need to be introduced to improve the skills of tour guides. Distance learning allows guides to gain new knowledge about sustainable tourism, environmental practices and the latest technologies. Internship programmes abroad and the exchange of experience with foreign colleagues can significantly improve the professionalism of tour guides.

Technologies and innovations in the sightseeing industry open up new horizons for tourism development, help reduce the negative impact on the environment and improve the quality of service. The integration of modern technological solutions into sightseeing activities will help Ukraine become a competitive tourist destination offering unique and sustainable experiences for tourists.

In order to develop sustainable tourism in Ukraine, it is important to develop recommendations for the implementation of environmental practices in excursion activities. In particular, this may include training of guides on environmental issues, creation of partnerships between tourism companies and local communities to develop joint programmes [1; 5].

Tour guides play a key role in the implementation of sustainable practices. This requires courses in environmental education. Develop training programmes that include sustainable development, environmental responsibility, and cultural heritage preservation. For example, the training of tour guides could focus on the impact of tourism on the environment and cultural resources. Introduce a certification system for guides that confirms their knowledge of sustainable development and environmental practices.

This will help increase trust in tour services and promote sustainable tourism. Organise platforms for the exchange of experience between tour guides from different regions. This could include seminars, conferences and webinars where guides share best practices in sustainable tourism. Active participation of local residents in tourism processes is important for sustainable development. Partnerships should be established between tourism companies and local communities to involve them in the development of tourism products.

For example, creating itineraries that include traditional food, crafts and cultural events helps to preserve local traditions and benefits local people. Conduct information campaigns that explain the benefits of sustainable tourism to local people. This can include lectures, information stands or public meetings to discuss the benefits and opportunities. Financial assistance can be provided from the government or private investors to build infrastructure that supports sustainable tourism, such as road repairs, eco-trails, and tourism information centres.

It is necessary to create tourism products that meet the principles of sustainable development. Develop routes that focus on natural and cultural sites that need to be preserved. These can be hiking or cycling routes that reduce the negative impact on nature. Create an eco-labelling system for tour companies and routes that meet the criteria for sustainable development. This can be an iconic designation that tourists can look for when choosing excursions. Encourage the use of local products and traditional cuisine during excursions. The organisation of gastronomic events can attract tourists and contribute to the development of the local economy.

Modern technology can significantly improve the environmental sustainability of sightseeing activities. Develop applications that provide information on environmental

practices, routes, and help plan excursions with environmental aspects in mind (e.g., low-impact routes). Use of these technologies to conduct virtual tours that reduce the physical impact on the sites. This is particularly relevant for popular tourist destinations where congestion can be significant. technologies to monitor the environmental conditions of areas visited by tourists. This may include sensors for measuring air or water pollution levels, as well as systems for collecting data on tourist flows.

It is necessary to intensify information campaigns and initiatives to promote sustainable tourism. Use platforms to promote environmental practices and encourage responsible behaviour among tourists. Regular publications with conservation tips can raise awareness in society. Organise campaigns and events aimed at promoting sustainable tourism. For example, you can organise clean-up days, where tourists and local residents work together to clean up the areas around popular tourist attractions. Include sustainable tourism in the curricula of schools and universities to promote environmental awareness among the younger generation. Government agencies should support sustainable tourism development by: developing and implementing laws and regulations that encourage sustainable tourism. This may include tax incentives for businesses that comply with environmental standards or restrictions on certain activities that are harmful to the environment.

Tour guides play a key role in the implementation of sustainable practices. This requires courses in environmental education. Develop training programmes that include sustainable development, environmental responsibility, and cultural heritage preservation. For example, the training of tour guides could focus on the impact of tourism on the environment and cultural resources. Introduce a certification system for guides that confirms their knowledge of sustainable development and environmental practices.

Creation of funds to support environmental projects in the tourism sector that can be used to develop infrastructure or training programmes. Participation in international programmes and initiatives aimed at developing sustainable tourism. This may include sharing experience with other countries and attracting foreign investment in sustainable tourism. Implementation of these recommendations will not only contribute to the development of the excursion business, but also to the improvement of the environmental situation in Ukraine, maintaining a balance between the needs of tourists and the interests of local communities.

It is necessary to formulate strategies for the development of excursion business aimed at integrating the principles of sustainable development, in particular by improving tourism legislation, stimulating investment in environmentally friendly technologies and developing

infrastructure that meets the requirements of sustainable tourism [3]. Important elements of the excursion development strategy include the formation of goals and priorities. Improving the quality of excursion services.

Ensuring high standards of tourist services through professional training of guides, innovative tour formats and interactive elements. Preservation of natural and cultural heritage. Promoting the preservation of ecosystems and cultural sites by developing eco-trails and programmes that emphasise the importance of conserving these resources. Engaging local communities. Active participation of local residents in the development and implementation of excursion programmes, which contributes to the economic development of the regions and improves the quality of excursion services.

Introduce an eco-labelling system for excursion products and companies that comply with the principles of sustainable development. This may include requirements for environmentally friendly transport, use of local resources and environmental protection. Developing mobile applications for booking tours, obtaining information about sites, and planning routes with environmental aspects in mind. Use virtual and augmented reality technologies to create interactive tours that reduce the physical impact on sensitive ecosystems.

Conducting marketing campaigns to raise awareness of sustainable tourism. Use of social media, blogs and visual content to promote sustainability tours. Partnering with travel agencies to promote eco-friendly routes and sustainable practices to tourists. Seek public and private investment to implement projects aimed at developing the infrastructure of excursion activities, including the creation of new routes, tourist centres and information points. Creation of support programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector that implement environmental practices [8].

Regular monitoring of the impact of sightseeing activities on the environment and local communities. Collecting data on tourist flows and their impact on natural resources and social infrastructure. Making changes to the strategy based on the data obtained, which allows us to respond quickly to challenges and ensure the sustainable development of the excursion business.

Partnership with universities and research centres to study the environmental and social aspects of tourism and develop innovative solutions. Engaging the experience of other countries in the field of sustainable tourism, participating in international conferences, projects and exchange programmes. The proposed strategy for the development of excursion

business in Ukraine is aimed at integrating the principles of sustainable development into all aspects of tourism.

It involves the active participation of local communities, the use of the latest technologies, improving the quality of excursion services and preserving natural and cultural resources. This will allow Ukraine to become an attractive destination for tourists who value environmental friendliness and responsibility in their travels.

Conclusions. The article examines the development of the excursion business in the context of sustainable tourism, identifies its relevance and the main principles that need to be taken into account to achieve balanced development in this area. After analysing current trends and challenges, several key conclusions can be drawn: the need for sustainable practices, the role of guides, the involvement of local communities, the use of technology, the need for a strategy, and prospects for the future. Thus, sightseeing has a huge potential for development in the context of sustainable tourism. Depending on the joint efforts of the state, local communities and tourism companies, Ukraine can become an example of successful implementation of sustainable practices in the tourism industry, which will ensure its long-term economic growth and preservation of natural and cultural resources for future generations.

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