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RP urged to impose tourism tax

By Ma. Elisa P. Osorio (The Philippine Star) Updated October 27, 2009 12:00 AM

MANILA, Philippines - The government must impose a [tourism promotion](#) tax in order to help improve tourism services in the country, a German international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development with worldwide operations said yesterday.

"There must be a one-percent tourism [promotion](#) tax for the sole use of the Department of Tourism (DOT)," Uwe Sturmman, [project manager](#) of German Technical Cooperation's (GTZ) Private Sector Promotion (PSP) said in an interview at a tourism dialogue held yesterday at Dusit [Hotel](#).

Sturmman said there must be a cohesive plan to market the country to encourage foreign investments. For instance, he said Malaysia has an integrated campaign to promote their country to foreigners.

"When was the last time the commercial for the Philippines was shown in CNN?" Strumann asked. He said it is understandable that the [government](#) has no funds for a marketing campaign. This is the reason why there is a need to impose a minimal tax in order to encourage tourism.

Strumann said a one-percent tourism tax may be imposed together with the bill for hotel accommodations. He said tourists will not mind the additional cost especially if the service in tourism will improve.



He said this can take the place of an arrival tax which basically is an entrance fee. He said there is a need to advertise because the tourism market is very competitive. He said people must be made aware of the beauty of the country through a cohesive marketing effort.

"The Philippines has no corporate identity. A brand must be given to the product and the [money](#) from the tax can be used here," he said.

Strumann said it is very important to improve tourism services because foreigners who visit the Philippines have been to other places before. "They will compare the

services in the Philippines with that of other countries," he said. Usually, he noted that the service in the Philippines is inferior to others.

"Hotels here are relatively expensive but some of the beds are not comfortable, there are no hangers, the toilets don't flush," Strumann lamented. For example, he said he has visited hotels in Tacloban which are not very comfortable and yet they are given three or four stars ratings.

This suggests that there is a need to overhaul the rating system in the country. He said a private sector group must be formed which will help rate hotels so that the public will not be misled. Strumann said the ratings should not be given frivolously.

He said a mystery hotel guest must be hired to stay in the hotel and review the actual service. He said this is a good way to check if average hotel guests are treated well and if the hotel deserves the number of stars given to it.

"Unless hotels rectify their shortcomings, they will not be given a rating. People with mediocre services will be given the ratings due them," he said.

"If quality standards are imposed then hotels will be forced to upgrade their facilities. The quality must match the stricter standards," Strumann stressed. He said this task should not be given to [local government](#) units because businessmen also benefit from tourist arrivals.

Likewise he said businessmen are closer to the market than the government. He said the private sector must be given a voice to help improve tourism.

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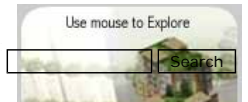
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