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**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY GEOTOURISM COMMITMENT RECOGNIZED
AT CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE**
Geotourism Commitment Launches with Annual Ashoka Competition

NEW YORK—At the Third Annual Meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative today, the National Geographic Society was recognized for spearheading a new \$25 million Geotourism Commitment aimed at protecting and celebrating the world’s distinctive destinations. National Geographic defines geotourism as “tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents.”

This Geotourism Commitment, which will be funded by National Geographic and other partners, will be used to demonstrate how communities around the world can use geotourism to help alleviate poverty, promote sustainable stewardship of places and tourism-related assets, and minimize negative environmental and social impacts often associated with mass tourism development.

The Geotourism Commitment includes five key elements for implementation over the next three years: 1) research and training on best practices; 2) creation of a global geotourism network of experts to exchange information and ideas; 3) six demonstration projects to implement and evaluate the geotourism approach; 4) a global media marketing campaign; and 5) sustainable funding to ensure continuation of geotourism in local communities.

To launch the Geotourism Commitment, National Geographic is partnering with Changemakers (an Ashoka initiative) to create three annual online competitions. The first “Geotourism Challenge” will debut January 2008 with a dedicated Web site to encourage online nominations for innovative solutions in sustainable tourism and destination stewardship.

National Geographic’s Center for Sustainable Destinations (CSD) will coordinate the Geotourism Commitment. CSD Director Jonathan B. Tourtellot is attending the Clinton Global Initiative to announce its partnership with Ashoka and to seek additional partners for National Geographic’s Geotourism Commitment.

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“With its emphasis on place-based assets and benefits, geotourism can help residents increase employment opportunities with the production of indigenous crafts, preparing local guide services, developing and providing hospitality services, and providing unique and valued cultural educational experiences for visitors,” Tourtelot said.

The Geotourism Commitment builds on CSD’s ongoing geotourism education and place-based initiatives using a holistic approach. To date, the Center has developed 13 guiding principles that serve as the foundation for the geotourism approach; signed Geotourism Charters with countries of Guatemala, Honduras, Norway, and Romania; and created branded Geotourism MapGuides to showcase the unique assets of Appalachia, Arizona-Sonora and the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. The new Commitment allows CSD to enhance its existing geotourism efforts and design innovative approaches to sustainable tourism worldwide.

President Clinton started the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) in 2005. A non-partisan catalyst for action, CGI brings together a community of global leaders to devise and implement innovative solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges. CGI consists of approximately 1,000 members from all over the world who commit to creating or supporting projects within one or more of CGI’s annual areas of focus. In 2007 the areas of focus are education, energy and climate change, global health and poverty alleviation.

The National Geographic Society is one of the world’s largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. Founded in 1888 to “increase and diffuse geographic knowledge,” the Society works to inspire people to care about the planet. It reaches more than 300 million people worldwide each month through its official journal, National Geographic, and other magazines; National Geographic Channel; television documentaries; music; radio; films; books; DVDs; maps; school publishing programs; interactive media; and merchandise. National Geographic has funded more than 8,000 scientific research projects and supports an education program combating geographic illiteracy. For more information on geotourism and National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations, visit www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable.

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