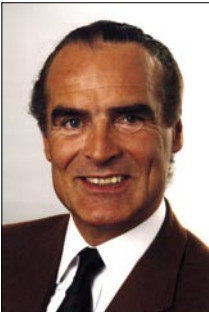


WOLF MICHAEL IWAND
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When I was invited to become a member of the Scientific Committee for preparing the Starlight Initiative’s conference, I felt as if I had seen the light because of the stellar concept and vision behind this project. During the preparations I became even more enthusiastic and at the same time contemplative: Why do we immediately think of an “island in the sun” when we market the world as a holiday paradise, rather than a “night sky in the desert or above El Teide or over the ocean”? There are several indicators that our “Sunset and Champagne” tours can be supplemented by many other spectacular natural wonders waiting in the wings to ignite our fantasy and spirituality: such as the Milky Way, the full moon, shooting stars, and constellations like the Big Dipper or the Southern Cross.

“La Palma“ is almost predestined to play a leading role as a destination in the discovery and protection of the starry sky. TUI’s commitment to this process is therefore also a commitment to the La Palma UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, its tireless manager Antonio San Blas, and the government of La Palma – and its ambitious policy harmonising the needs of people, nature and society: “Bright stars above the Biosphere”.

Unlike Douglas Adams’ “Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy”, our intention is not to set our sights on the commercial attractions of the million-dollar business with space travel tickets, but to make a contribution with all the senses and the secrets of “Polynesian navigation” (navigating with “eyes wide shut”), to protect the cosmic wonder of the starry sky as part of our cultural heritage, and one of humankind’s most awesomely beautiful treasures.

As a representative of the tourism sector, I support this project unconditionally, with no prior expertise, innocent and open like an unwritten page. Our contribution also pays homage to Cipriano Marin, an extraordinary innovator and visionary agent of change, who has guided and influenced TUI’s strategy for islands – and the Canaries in particular – since the 1995 World Conference on Sustainable Tourism in Lanzarote. The articles in this book, the outcome of the conference on La Palma, and the “World Declaration in Defence of the Night Sky and the Right to Starlight” will become key references guiding TUI’s future actions. Although nothing is likely to change the continuing success of the traditional “3S” tourism formula (sun, sea and sand), this publication should open and raise our eyes beyond the horizon to the guiding star of a new innovative 3S constellation: stars, (night) skies and sustainability.