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## RECORD \$50M TOURISM INVESTMENT FOR ECUADOR

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### **Sustainable tourism key in vision to become world leading destination**

A new £10m global campaign starting in the UK this month signifies the increasing importance of tourism to Ecuador, and a bold vision to make Ecuador one of the world's leading tourism destinations.

Ecuador's government has committed a record 50 million dollar investment in tourism development and promotion in 2011 that recognises tourism's potential to provide economic opportunities for indigenous communities.

Tourism will also help to preserve the natural assets of the country's four distinct environments: the Andean highlands, the coastal tropical plains, the Amazon Basin and the Galapagos Islands.

Tourism is currently Ecuador's fourth largest income-earner, with the small South American country welcoming 8.3% growth in numbers to reach one million international visitors for the first time last year.

The new promotional campaign will pit Ecuador against destinations such as Brazil and Peru as it targets independent travellers who have traditionally passed through the country on the way to the Galapagos. The 'Love Life' campaign will showcase more of Ecuador itself, a country the same size as Britain that is considered to be the world's most biologically diverse.

Ana Alban, Ecuador Ambassador in London, said: "Our country is extraordinary. You'll find many of the things within our borders that people travel the length and breadth of South

America to see. Now is the time to help travellers discover Ecuador."

With the country's key tourism selling point its biodiversity and nature-based activities, sustainability is key to Ecuador's tourism strategy and the country's tourism board is leading the way in South America. In 2008 the government amended the constitution to legally recognise the Rights of Nature, the first country in the world to do so.

"The aim of our new campaign is to increase British tourists to Ecuador, but not at just any cost. Our natural environment is precious and the campaign targets thinking tourists who will recognise the value of our natural heritage and people - Ecuador is a country these people will fall in love with," says Minister of Tourism Freddy Ehlers.

"We recognise the potential of the tourism industry to support rural and indigenous communities, and protect the country's colonial towns, ancient ruins, and areas of natural beauty. We're investing in tourism development and promotion across the country in order to decentralize tourism, and encourage more industry players" continued Mr Ehlers.

"Tourism can really make a difference to people's lives, and the Ecuadorian people really welcome visitors into their communities."

Examples of the Ministry of Tourism's regional investment programme include:

- The Galapagos Tourism Observatory opened last week, and information supplied by the new environmental and tourism monitoring centre will help guide government and tourism industry decision making towards a new model of eco tourism on the islands. The new observatory was built as an outcome of Ecuador's first Sustainable Tourism Galapagos summit in September 2010.
- Last month the Ministry of Tourism announced \$1.3m for the Chimborazo province and \$ 1m for the Cotopaxi province this year, with money to go toward improving key tourist attractions and signage in the regions, as well as training local tourism operators, tourism development projects and promotion.
- The Ministry of Tourism has opened the first ever tourism department office in Macas, to promote local Amazon paths and circuits in an area traditionally off-the-beaten track, which has just opened a new modern airport.
- Ecuador's capital city has been transformed in the last decade by a revitalisation campaign that has seen \$350m poured in to the city. Restoration of historic buildings and construction of hotels and attractions have made Quito more accessible, and a strengthened Policía de Turismo has made the streets safer for visitors - the result has been a 54% increase in tourism to the city in the last five years.
- Increasing visitors and investment helped to create a fine-dining scene - in the last two years alone four top new restaurants have opened.
- Quito is American Cultural Capital in 2011 and will celebrate with a series of events throughout the year, including CULTOUR - a global travel trade event promoting cultural tourism, which will take place in Quito from 22 to 24 June and is sponsored by Ecuador's Ministry of Tourism and the City of Quito

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