



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
28 July 2020

Original: English

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## Seventy-fifth session

Item 23 of the provisional agenda\*

### Eradication of poverty and other development issues

## Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection

### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization on the promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection, submitted in accordance with Assembly resolution [73/245](#).

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\* [A/75/150](#).



# Report of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization on the promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection

## I. Introduction

1. The Secretary-General was requested to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, in collaboration with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and other relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, a report on the implementation of resolution [73/245](#), entitled “Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection”, including recommendations on ways and means to promote sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, as a tool for fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development. As the specialized agency of the United Nations system responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, UNWTO was tasked with preparing the present report.

2. The advances described in the present report reflect the results from a survey conducted in May 2020 among all Member States on developments and advances made in sustainable tourism and ecotourism since the issuance of the previous report on the matter ([A/73/274](#) and [A/73/274/Corr.1](#)), inputs received from other United Nations entities and international organizations, and the research and experience of UNWTO.

## II. Unprecedented global health emergency: the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

3. The present report has been prepared in the context of the global health crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), a crisis unlike any other seen in the 75-year history of the United Nations. The COVID-19 pandemic has had the greatest impact on everyday life of any crisis experienced in the twenty-first century, with physical distancing, quarantine and isolation measures seriously threatening the stability and growth of economies, the livelihoods of populations and the functioning of health systems worldwide.

4. The tourism sector has been among the hardest hit of the major economic sectors. As described in the UNWTO *World Tourism Barometer* update of June 2020,<sup>1</sup> international tourist arrivals fell by 44 per cent in the first four months of 2020 compared with the same period the previous year, representing a loss of 180 million international arrivals, which translates to \$195 billion in lost international tourism receipts. UNWTO has developed three scenarios for the tourism sector in 2020,<sup>2</sup> according to which international tourist arrivals will decline by between 58 and 78 per cent, depending on when travel restrictions are lifted, although the outlook remains highly uncertain. This represents by far the worst development for international tourism since 1950 and is expected to put an abrupt end to the 10-year period of sustained growth since the 2009 financial crisis.

5. The decline in global tourism has already taken a heavy toll on national economies and people’s livelihoods. While the world has been slowly opening up again, with destinations cautiously easing travel restrictions introduced in response

<sup>1</sup> UNWTO, *World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex*, vol. 18, No. 3 (June 2020).

<sup>2</sup> UNWTO, *World Tourism Barometer*, vol. 18, No. 2 (May 2020).

to the COVID-19 pandemic, as at 15 June 2020, a total of just 22 per cent of destinations worldwide (48 destinations) had eased COVID-19-related travel restrictions. The borders of 65 per cent of destinations worldwide (141 destinations) remain completely closed to international tourism.

6. Countries around the world are implementing a wide range of measures to address the global health and economic emergencies, including new health and safety protocols, to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to rebuild a responsible and sustainable recovery of the tourism sector. From the very beginning of the pandemic, UNWTO focused its efforts on assisting its member States in managing the crisis, rebuilding people's confidence in travel and enhancing tourism's contribution to the wider socioeconomic recovery. To that end, UNWTO formed the Global Tourism Crisis Committee, comprising representatives of States members and affiliate members of UNWTO, alongside relevant United Nations entities, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and international business associations, which produced the "Global guidelines to restart tourism",<sup>3</sup> to provide Governments and businesses alike with a comprehensive set of 23 recommendations and 6 priorities that are designed to help them to reopen tourism in a safe, seamless and responsible manner.

7. Building on the UNWTO "Global guidelines to restart tourism" and under the leadership of UNWTO, on 5 June 2020 the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the One Planet network released the "One planet vision for a responsible recovery of the tourism sector".<sup>4</sup> The vision provides strategic guidance for a recovery which is founded on sustainability – building back better and underpinning the resilience of the tourism sector – in line with UNWTO priorities. The vision is aimed at supporting the development and implementation of recovery plans which contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

### III. Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

8. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement express the commitment of the international community to achieving a balanced and sustainable development path and underscore the importance of mainstreaming sustainability principles and climate action criteria into all social and economic activities and sectors, including tourism. The political declaration entitled "Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development", adopted by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in September 2019, the 2019 Climate Action Summit, held in New York on 23 September 2019, and the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in December 2019, all highlighted the crucial importance of urgently scaling up progress and accelerating action in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and the vision of the 2030 Agenda.

9. The provision of technical, sound and actionable data is essential to all climate change action. The report entitled *Transport-related CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions of the Tourism Sector: Modelling Results*,<sup>5</sup> prepared by UNWTO and the International Transport Forum, is the first comprehensive study into the environmental impact of the different types of transport within the tourism sector. The report was launched at the official side event of the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme, held in Madrid on 3 December 2019, on the sidelines of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of

<sup>3</sup> UNWTO, "Global guidelines to restart tourism", May 2020.

<sup>4</sup> UNWTO, "'Sustainability as the new normal' a vision for the future of tourism", 5 June 2020.

<sup>5</sup> UNWTO and International Transport Forum, *Transport-related CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions of the Tourism Sector: Modelling Results* (Madrid, UNWTO, 2019).

the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The report highlights that, if the current ambition remains unchanged, by 2030, transport-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from tourism are expected to increase by 25 per cent, reaching 1,998 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> (up from 1,597 million tons of transport-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2016). Thus, by 2030, transport-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will have represented 5.3 per cent (up from 5 per cent in 2016) of overall human-made CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

10. Developed by the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the One Planet network, the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative<sup>6</sup> was officially launched on 22 January 2020. The Initiative is led by UNWTO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. It is aimed at uniting the tourism sector behind a common vision to tackle the root causes of plastic pollution, enabling businesses, Governments and other tourism stakeholders to take concerted action, leading by example in the shift towards circularity in the use of plastics.

11. UNWTO has also continued to work closely with stakeholders at the local level to improve evidence generation across the three pillars of sustainability. Given that the environmental and sociocultural pillars of sustainability have long lagged behind in terms of monitoring efforts, the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories<sup>7</sup> continues to support destinations in undertaking more holistic measurement approaches. The initiative is aimed at supporting the continuous improvement of sustainability in the tourism sector at subnational destination levels through systematic, regular and timely monitoring of tourism performance, resource use and impact. As at 10 January 2020, the Network comprised 28 observatories worldwide.

#### **IV. Findings on efforts and progress towards sustainable tourism as tool for economic growth, poverty reduction, development and environment protection**

12. In May 2020, UNWTO conducted a survey on the implementation of resolution [73/245](#). The survey was addressed to Member States and also requested inputs from relevant United Nations agencies and programmes on the developments and advances made with regard to the areas covered in the resolution. The responses submitted by the 37 respondents to the survey, as well as additional inputs received, provide insights into the efforts that have been made. According to the findings, while overall progress has been made on many fronts, some major challenges remain, as illustrated in the following sections.

##### **A. Implementation of and progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, voluntary national reviews and national tourism policies**

13. The majority of respondents reported that their tourism strategies had been rewritten or adjusted over the previous five years to specifically address the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. The national strategic plan for tourism of Peru for the period 2016–2025 was aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals in order to contribute to sustainable tourism and the country's competitiveness. The Ministry of Foreign Trade and

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<sup>6</sup> See [www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-tourism/global-tourism-plastics-initiative](http://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-tourism/global-tourism-plastics-initiative).

<sup>7</sup> See <http://insto.unwto.org/>.

Tourism has been developing and adjusting strategies and initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including a community tourism strategy, a social tourism initiative and the Pueblos con Encanto (charming villages) initiative.

15. In order to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the Bahamas began, in 2014, to develop a 25-year national development plan, “Vision 2040”, localizing the 2030 Agenda into its national development planning process and thereby providing a road map for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2018, the plan formed the basis of the voluntary national review on the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. In Algeria, the 2008 master plan for tourism development was updated in 2013 and evaluated in 2019 in order to ensure that gaps could be filled and plans and programmes adopted to promote tourism in the country. Following the adoption of the master plan, the Ministry of Tourism, Handicrafts and Family Work drew up its action plan, which is aimed at promoting tourism and handicrafts and capacity-building for work within the family, and is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

17. The national sustainable development strategy of Egypt, “Vision 2030”, is based on the principles of inclusive sustainable development and balanced regional development, emphasizing the importance of the full participation in development of, and the need to ensure its yields to, all parties; the provision of equal opportunities for all; the closure of development gaps; and the efficient use of resources to ensure the rights of future generations.

18. In Austria, the 2019 master plan for tourism, “Plan T”, lays down guidelines for the sustainable development of tourism and serves as a guide for political decisions at all levels. The master plan is aimed at contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. “Plan T” is supplemented by an annual action plan for implementation, which sets out concrete implementation measures and is intended to facilitate rapid responses to changes in a dynamic environment.

19. Most of the respondents to the survey also conducted voluntary national reviews on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in collaboration or consultation with the national tourism authority in the great majority of cases.<sup>8</sup> Some of the wider effects of tourism that are mentioned in the voluntary national reviews include better coordination across national and regional government institutions, partnerships with the private sector and/or civil society, additional funding for tourism activities and enhanced visibility at the international level.

20. Most of the respondents referred to strategic documents that were in effect for the development of tourism in their countries, with various degrees of progress achieved in the implementation of their main strategic documents. On a related subject, regulatory and economic instruments and measures are the main instruments put in place by Governments to enhance the sustainability of the tourism sector, with some of the regulatory instruments taking the form of environmental legislation, for example the Parks and Wildlife Act in Zimbabwe; resolution No. DM-0530-2017 establishing whale watching in the jurisdictional waters of Panama and the ban on the use of certain single-use plastic items in Monaco.

21. Some examples of economic instruments can be found, for example, in Slovakia, where green innovations are being stimulated to increase the proportion of green procurement, public support for environmentally harmful activities is gradually being phased out and polluters are held responsible for the environmental damage

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<sup>8</sup> As reported by 78 per cent of respondents.

that they cause; in Monaco, where a clean transport subsidy for electric and hybrid vehicles has been introduced, along with a fleet of electric taxis and hybrid buses, and differentiated policies for the use of car parks and electric bicycles; and in Seychelles, where the Seychelles Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Programme, which was launched in 2014, provides households and small enterprises with soft loans for the purchase of energy-efficient appliances and renewable energy equipment.

22. In terms of voluntary instruments, many of them take the form of certification systems. Among those reported by countries were the Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label, a sustainable tourism management and certification programme designed specifically for use in Seychelles; the Global Safety Stamp and ecolabel standard MS165:2014 for sustainable tourism in Mauritius; Green Key international certification for certain hotels in the United Arab Emirates; and European Union ecolabel certification in Croatia.

23. Other voluntary instruments are focused on domestic tourism: in Slovenia, the annual “Days of Slovenian tourism” event, which includes the Slovenian Tourism Forum, is the main tourism industry event in the country; in Bulgaria, targeted promotional campaigns are run in support of domestic tourism; in Zimbabwe, the “Know your Zimbabwe” campaign is also aimed at boosting domestic tourism; in Slovakia, the national “Bike to work” and “Bike to school” campaigns promote environmentally friendly modes of transport in cities; in the Philippines, the regional Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Tourism Standards encourage stakeholders to further improve sustainable tourism standards; and in Myanmar, various ASEAN awards are handed out to outstanding hotels and tourism products. Other examples of voluntary instruments include the travel show aired by the television channel of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism of Peru, “Letras Viajeras” (travelling letters), which highlights little-known places in the country; the national “Alliance for one million” reforestation programme in Panama and the “Green is the new glam” responsible tourism campaign in Monaco.

## **B. Inclusive growth and poverty reduction through sustainable tourism: empowering the poor, women, young people, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and local communities**

24. Member States report that some progress has been made in recent years in accelerating inclusive growth and poverty reduction through sustainable tourism, as in the case of Viet Nam, which reports that local communities participating in tourism activities have benefited from increased income, stable employment and improved cultural knowledge. In the same vein, in Myanmar, community-based tourism projects have been implemented in rural areas near major destinations.

25. Slovenia reports that the development of sustainable tourism in rural regions, even in degraded areas, has provided new employment opportunities for local populations, not only in the hospitality sector but also in other areas of the economy that are closely connected to tourism. Meanwhile, Croatia has seen poverty reduction through the development of sustainable tourism and diversification of tourism. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, indicates that poverty reduction is being achieved through the promotion of public-private partnerships and community-based tourism, involving locals in the exploitation of their tourism resources, while Zambia describes a policy to empower women and young people running small and medium-sized enterprises to gain access to affordable financing for investment in the tourism sector.

26. Germany refers to the increase in the minimum wage – especially relevant for restaurant servers and housekeepers – and notes that development cooperation in the tourism sector focuses on poverty reduction, capacity-building and education.

Portugal indicates that inclusive tourism and poverty reduction are aspects accounted for in its national strategy for tourism and that there is a clear emphasis on reducing seasonality in tourism and on enforcing territorial cohesion, while Bulgaria reports that the average salary in the tourism sector has increased and refers to training programmes to enable people employed in tourism to gain qualifications.

27. Efforts to achieve inclusive growth and poverty reduction through sustainable tourism include national programmes, as reported by the United Arab Emirates; the Malaysia Homestay Programme, a rural ecotourism programme which empowers local communities to increase their income and quality of life; and community-based tourism projects that are being implemented in rural areas near the major destinations in Myanmar.

28. Through its staff criteria, the Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label is aimed at recognizing the fair treatment of staff and staffing opportunities given to local people to reduce staff turnover and encourage loyalty. It requires hotels to offer equal employment and advancement opportunities, including management positions, without discrimination based on gender, race, religion and disability, among others.

29. Poverty reduction is the focus of the national tourism strategy in Chile, while in Mexico priority government projects that follow models of inclusion and distributive justice include the Mayan Train and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In El Salvador, tourism employment in the formal and informal sectors has been steadily increasing in recent years.

30. Tourism activity has been a key driver of employment generation and foreign exchange in Nicaragua. According to data from the companies that are on the national register of tourism, a total of 25,458 direct jobs were generated in the tourism sector of Nicaragua in 2006, while in 2019 that figure had risen to 47,206 direct jobs, with 52.1 per cent of those jobs being held by women and 47.9 per cent by men. In Viet Nam, the tourism sector has created jobs and direct income for some 2.5 million people and has gradually become a key economic sector, contributing directly to the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

31. In Algeria, the tourism sector contributed 1.7 per cent of GDP to the national economy in 2018, while nearly 12,000 new jobs were registered in the hospitality and travel sector in 2019. In addition, according to Ministry of Tourism, Handicrafts and Family Work statistics, the craft sector currently covers 339 activities generating 980,000 real jobs. Furthermore, the National Agency for the Management of Microcredit supports the socioeconomic integration of vulnerable people through the provision of small, interest-free loans.

32. In relation to good practices and lessons learned on social inclusion, Croatia drew attention to the operational programme "Efficient human resources", through which the Ministry of Tourism is financing 41 projects following a call for proposals on improving the access of vulnerable groups to the labour market in the sector of tourism and hospitality, investing assets from the European Social Fund for a total amount of €8.2 million. In 2019, Portugal was the first country to be presented with the Accessible Tourism Destination award by UNWTO for the efforts that it had made to promote tourism accessibility, which have since been continued and strengthened.

33. In Slovenia, the Impact Tourism network presents and promotes tourism products, including those that facilitate the inclusion of and accessibility for vulnerable social groups or individuals. In Mauritius, the public is involved in consultation processes during the elaboration of strategic plans and guidelines. In Monaco, a number of public and private bodies are making efforts to integrate workers with disabilities into the workforce.

34. In Chile, particular focus has been placed on working with indigenous tourism and with local communities around national parks. In Mexico, consultation with civil society, local communities and indigenous people has been fundamental to the development of projects such as the Mayan Train or the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, as well as to the general territorial tourism management programme, known as “Kuxatur”. According to the World Economic Forum *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*, Nicaragua is the fifth most gender-equal country. The country also has policies in place for the benefit of indigenous and Afrodescendent communities. The gender perspective is integrated in the strategic axes of its tourism sector, highlighting the importance, prominence and empowerment of women and young people in the development of tourism activities at the national and local levels, with women representing 51.6 per cent of the sector.

35. In Peru, civil society, local communities and indigenous people participate in the process of environmental assessment of tourism projects and activities. The country reports that 21 per cent of tourism ventures financed by the “Turismo Emprende” programme are led by or include members of native and/or rural communities. In addition, the social tourism initiative promotes the participation in tourist activities of children, adolescents, young people, students, persons with disabilities, older persons and other groups of people who, owing to physical, economic, social or cultural reasons, have limited access to the enjoyment of such activities.

36. Panama has ratified the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement). Adopted in Escazú, Costa Rica, on 4 March 2018, the Agreement sets regional standards, fosters capacity-building, offers tools for improved policymaking and decision-making and strengthens cooperation. The Agreement’s central aim is to combat inequality and discrimination and to guarantee the rights of every person to a healthy environment and to sustainable development. In so doing, it pays particular attention to persons and groups in vulnerable situations.

### **C. Promoting employment and decent work in tourism through education, training and skills development**

37. In the 2030 Agenda, the international community embraced the goal of full employment and decent work for all. Countries are now striving to reach that goal through their national plans. The tourism and leisure industry is predicted to be one of the fastest-growing sectors in the future, with increasing demand for qualified employees.

38. The development of measures to address the shortage of human resources and lack of skills and competencies among domestic human resources, which affect the competitiveness of tourism and its overall growth, is one of the main national policy priorities for Croatia. The Ministry of Tourism is financing the establishment of regional centres of competence in the tourism and hospitality sector to improve the quality of education in the sector and ensure that it is adapted to the needs of the labour market.

39. The community tourism strategy in Peru establishes the economic inclusion of local communities in the tourism chain, building capacities in the management of their businesses and organizations, improving their tourism products, promoting their experiences and fostering the involvement of key actors in governance processes. The strategy has driven the development of 70 communities and the emergence of 1,663 community entrepreneurs in 13 regions of the country.

40. In Mauritius, the Human Resource Development Council works in collaboration with hotels to encourage young people to work in the industry, while in Zimbabwe, the Government promotes the employment of young people and women in tourism, also empowering them with resources to run their own ventures. In Algeria, the National Youth Employment Support Agency implements mechanisms to support youth employment, assists young promoters in carrying out investment projects and manages the National Fund for Employment Support for young people who are interested in investing in sustainable tourism.

41. Austria emphasizes the importance of young people being informed of the training and employment opportunities that tourism offers. Dedicated information material has been developed and published in different languages to encourage young people to start a career in tourism.

#### **D. Advancing towards societal transformation and ambitious climate emissions reduction measures for the tourism sector**

42. Addressing the climate change challenges faced by the tourism sector requires an integrated, forward-looking approach to policy formulation and implementation. As reported by most of the respondents, although progress has been achieved, much work remains to be done to ensure that national policies are aligned with nationally determined contributions and that national tourism authorities are involved in the preparation of those policies.

43. Nevertheless, Member States are taking urgent action to address climate change and its impacts, with initiatives and strategies covering the energy, housing, transport, industrial, waste and forest sectors. That action seems to be centred, in particular, on national renewable energy, clean energy and energy efficiency programmes, national carbon funds for small and medium-sized enterprises and energy efficiency labelling for appliances.

44. A guide to low-carbon development in the tourism sector in Egypt, produced by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in cooperation with the Low-Emission Capacity-building Programme, provides an analytical optimization framework for the use of renewable energy technologies in tourism establishments and highlights the importance of the involvement of the tourism sector in the preparation of the next nationally determined contribution to be submitted to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change before the end of 2020.

45. In Austria, the Climate and Energy Fund supports communities in regions in implementing projects in the field of renewable energy, reduction of energy consumption and sustainable mobility. Furthermore, it has launched a climate and energy strategy, “Mission 2030”, which addresses the shift to low-emission mobility, and, in September 2019, presented an initiative entitled “Sustainability in the hotel industry – set an example”, aimed at establishing leadership on sustainability in the Austrian hotel business, including avoiding waste, putting an end to the use of plastics and increasing energy efficiency.

46. In Slovenia, many destinations encourage soft mobility and the use of public transport. In Bohinj, for example, significant discounts and bonuses are awarded to visitors who arrive by public transport and use the Bohinj Mobility Card for local transportation. All the destinations in the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism, which includes service and accommodation providers in tourism across the country, have to state in their action plans how they intend to adapt to climate change as well as to the challenges specific to their microlocation.

47. In Portugal, the 2027 sustainable tourism strategy addresses good practices in relation to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, including a project on tourism CO<sub>2</sub> neutrality. In addition, Portugal was awarded the International Tourism Fair (ITB) Earth Award 2019 for sustainable tourism, while Azores, Sintra e Cascais and Alto Minho were all recognized for their best practices on resource efficiency in tourism.

48. The Bahamas intends to achieve its mitigation contribution to climate change through an economy-wide 30 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The country has developed a national climate adaptation policy and a national energy policy and has amended its Forestry Act. In addition, tourism stakeholders participated in the energy efficiency project “Caribbean hotel energy efficiency action”. Mauritius is also working on the reduction of the carbon footprint of the accommodation sector, and many hotels have already implemented plans to maximize their energy efficiency, reduce their carbon footprint and improve their waste management.

49. Other good practices in the tourism sector include promoting tree planting by tourists in Zimbabwe, as well as promoting walking safaris rather than game drives and using shuttle services rather than driving individual cars; promoting the use of alternative clean energy sources, such as solar energy, for tourism enterprises in Zambia; and the promotion of ASEAN Green Hotel Standards and zero carbon emissions in the Philippines.

50. Germany has established labelling schemes for the accommodation sector and independent compensation schemes for greenhouse gas emissions and has a network of tour operators that are taking climate protection into account across their entire portfolios. The country has seen more and more of its destinations being certified as sustainable tourist destinations according to the independent TourCert labelling scheme.

51. In the United Arab Emirates, the Abu Dhabi low-emission vehicles strategy and the Dubai green mobility strategy have set targets for a transition towards more efficient and low-emission vehicle technologies, including electric vehicles. Public transport options have expanded, with an increased number of buses operating across the emirates and further development of the Dubai metro links. Dubai has joined the Building Efficiency Accelerator, a public-private collaboration coordinated by the World Resources Institute under the Sustainable Energy for All initiative of the Secretary-General, which is aimed at doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030. The reduction of single-use plastic waste is also a priority for hotels and restaurants across the United Arab Emirates.

52. The “El Salvador saves energy” programme represents an advance in the transition to cleaner technologies in that country, while Mexico has produced a document entitled “Hacia una Estrategia Nacional de Eficiencia Energética para las Edificaciones de Hoteles y Restaurantes” (Towards a national energy efficiency strategy for the buildings of hotels and restaurants). In the transport sector, the Panama Metro developed an advisory document on nationally appropriate mitigation action for sustainable urban mobility in the metropolitan area of Panama in order to contribute to carbon emissions mitigation. In Monaco, relevant advances include the availability of self-service electric bicycles, a free-floating car-sharing service with electric vehicles, the use of hybrid buses and solar-powered boat buses, and the environmental certification and labelling of some 88 per cent of its hotels as a result of their efforts to reduce waste and energy and water consumption.

## **E. Initiatives on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources through sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, and on mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into tourism development**

53. The sustainable planning and management of tourism can play a critical role in the conservation of biodiversity. Respondents report having made important policy advances at the national level in recent years to protect their biodiversity through tourism, as well as on good practices in relation to biodiversity protection.

54. The national biodiversity strategy and action plan for the period 2015–2020 of Nicaragua promotes sustainable tourism, including the responsible enjoyment of biodiversity. The Ministry of Environment of Panama has a national biodiversity policy and strategy in place, together with management tools that allow decision-making based on scientific knowledge and the promotion of environmentally sustainable activities, taking into account all the key actors.

55. In its national development plan for the period 2018–2022, Angola has prioritized biodiversity protection, climate change and other environmental issues. The country also has a national biodiversity strategy and action plan for the period 2019–2025. The Government's biodiversity initiatives are focused on the Okavango basin, including the promotion of nature tourism and the cross-border Okavango-Zambezi project, which is aimed at contributing to socioeconomic and cultural development in Southern Africa, in particular in Angola.

56. Myanmar has formulated an ecotourism policy and management strategy for protected areas for the period 2015–2025, while Zambia has adopted Wildlife Act No. 14 (2015), which is aimed at conserving biodiversity in protected areas and the implementation of anti-poaching practices in the country's national parks, involving local communities through community resource boards. In Seychelles, a number of hotels have adopted biodiversity hotspots and are responsible for the management of those areas. A number of hotels are also involved in coral reef restoration projects.

57. Malaysia has a national policy on biological diversity in effect for the period 2016–2025, while the Philippines has a national ecotourism strategy in place for the period 2013–2022, with some good practices at the national level, including the presentation of the ASEAN Green Hotel Award to a number of hotels, the engagement of local communities in the protection of biodiversity and the closure and rehabilitation of the island of Boracay. Mauritius has a master plan for the zoning and management of lagoons for the tourism sector and has promulgated regulations controlling dolphin- and whale-watching activities, banning the use of jet skis and establishing speed limit zones in the lagoons.

58. The Ministry of Climate Change and Environment of the United Arab Emirates has launched a multi-phase national project entitled "The UAE's natural wonders", which now features over 100 sites, to promote ecotourism across the seven emirates. The sites include nature and dive sites, archaeological and historical sites, campsites, beaches, hotels and resorts that are recognized by international certification organizations, such as Blue Flag, for upholding high environmental standards. The project also includes dams, zoos and animal sanctuaries, bee parks and traditional handicraft suqs.

59. Croatia has an action plan for green tourism development which, among other things, contemplates activities to reduce the tourism sector's ecological footprint. In Chile, instruments have been elaborated for the development of zones of touristic interest and State-protected wilderness areas, and a working group has been established for the development of tourism in parks. A trail dedicated to biodiversity

and a heritage trees trail have been established in Monaco. Good practices at the national level include the organic treatment of green spaces and marine protected areas, and the creation of a new marine protected area as well as insect hotels and beehives.

60. The national strategy for the development of ecotourism for the period 2018–2027 in Romania is aimed at promoting ecotourism as the main form of tourism in the country and increasing the role that ecotourism plays in the economic development of those areas and the prosperity of the local populations.

61. In Brazil, a cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Tourism, the Chico Mendes Institute for the Conservation of Biodiversity and the Brazilian Tourism Board is aimed at developing ecological tourism in federal protected areas. In Peru, the national biodiversity strategy seeks to reduce direct pressures on biodiversity and promote its sustainable use. Examples of good practices include the Peruvian Association of Adventure Tourism, Ecotourism and Specialized Tourism and providers of tourism services such as Inkaterra.

62. The Bird-based Tourism Initiative in the Bahamas has provided training for bird tour guides from several islands over the past two years, with the goal of creating sustainable jobs while helping to protect Bahamian biodiversity and natural habitats. “Apostar no Aviturismo” (Betting on birdwatching) is an ecotourism birdwatching project in Angola with great potential given the low investment required and the country’s rich avifauna, comprising a total of 962 species, 15 of which are endemic.

63. Good practices in Germany include analysis of the impact of tourism in protected areas (national parks, biosphere reserves) and the development of specific tourism offers in protected areas that highlight the value of nature conservation and ecosystems. The Austrian Biodiversity Strategy 2020+ sets out goals and measurements to preserve the country’s biological diversity, and tourism is critical in that regard. The national parks of Austria provide a good example of how the protection of biodiversity and tourism can be combined.

64. In the Asia-Pacific region, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is supporting several national Governments in enhancing their tourism policies and operations and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation across the tourism sector. In Thailand, UNDP is working with the Biodiversity-based Economic Development Office and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports to mainstream biodiversity conservation in the tourism sector through the development of a model of community biodiversity-based tourism that showcases and recognizes biodiversity as the foundation of long-term tourism sustainability. The Thai economy is heavily reliant on tourism, which accounts for up to 20 per cent of GDP and 11 per cent of employment, with a staggering 35 million international arrivals per year (and 160 million domestic tourism trips). Following the disastrous impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism, the Government is developing strategies for the short- and longer-term recovery of the tourism sector, including introducing health and safety certifications to show tourists that Thailand is a safe destination.

65. UNDP is working with the Gross National Happiness Commission and the Tourism Council of Bhutan to develop and promote Bhutan as a model ecotourism destination, generating livelihood opportunities and sustainable financing for landscapes, including protected areas, promoting human-wildlife coexistence and avoiding the potential negative impacts of increasing tourism on the country’s sociocultural heritage and globally significant biodiversity. The work is in alignment with the Government’s major tourism flagship programme in the current five-year plan. Tourism is the focus of the Government’s medium-to-long-term plan for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has a renewed focus on tourism diversification, including ecotourism development. As part of its response to the

pandemic, the Government is focusing on increased skills development and tourism infrastructure development and maintenance.

### **Mainstreaming and integration of biodiversity within and across sectors**

66. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is working with the Linking Tourism and Conservation network to gather information and disseminate examples of best practice where tourism has effectively contributed to biodiversity. The network profiled 40 examples where tourism has supported the establishment or positive development of protected nature areas. As noted by the network, nature-based tourism and increasing public awareness are predicted to continue beyond the economic shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

67. A 2019 working paper by Space for Giants and UNEP, entitled “Building a wildlife economy”, indicates that African countries could see annual revenue from nature-based tourism increase by 4–11 times by 2025 – even discounting volumes due to retraction, these numbers will be significant. As a think tank, the Linking Tourism and Conservation network will collaborate with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNWTO and other actors to propose concrete standards to showcase how tourism can significantly enhance its contribution to the Convention’s agenda.

68. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been cooperating with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council since the Council’s inception to ensure that the original Council criteria are included in the Convention on Biological Diversity guidelines on sustainable tourism. In addition, building on its past work under the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources World Commission on Protected Areas, the Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group completed the *Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Sustainability* in 2018. Members of the Group have been working to share information, research and strategic thinking on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in protected areas, and how to build sustainable and resilient responses.

69. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is working with the World Resources Institute serving as the secretariat of the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy. The Panel’s advisory network has established a tourism action coalition to rally the sector to contribute to increased marine and coastal protection within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the framework of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The main objective of the “Tourism for people and nature” coalition is to align the interests of the tourism sector with those of other relevant stakeholders in order to promote, finance and implement nature-based solutions to sustain tourism and benefit coastal communities, and to provide recommendations to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its fifteenth meeting and the 2020 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

### **Nature-based solutions at the heart of tourism development**

70. UNDP supports a large portfolio of projects financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in African countries that help Governments and communities to unlock opportunities for managing their protected areas in ways that enable those areas to meet their potential as engines for tourism growth, providing environmental, social and financial returns in both the short and longer term.

71. Faced with the dual crisis of climate change and accelerating biodiversity loss, Seychelles has worked with UNDP, with the support of GEF and the Adaptation Fund, to develop and implement a programme that puts nature at the heart of development.

Through a series of projects, the country has taken steps to deliver the systemic change necessary to tackle political, financial and other drivers of nature loss, and to deliver its Blue Economy Vision. Key achievements include the strengthening of the tourism and fisheries sectors and the creation of marine refuges to protect spawning areas and sensitive habitats such as coral reefs, which protect the islands from the impacts of storms and tidal surges.

72. In the Comoros, with the support of UNDP through GEF, the Government has strengthened the protected areas system as an important platform for the development of sustainable tourism in the country and a key driver of future economic growth and development. Five new marine and terrestrial protected areas have been established, with a view to protecting the various terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems and providing an important part of the terrestrial and marine landscape of the three islands that are under protection. Interventions have contributed to the stepping up of efforts to operationalize the nascent marine protected area system and secure tangible livelihood benefits for communities living adjacent to the new protected areas through innovative co-management approaches, including tourism-based approaches.

73. UNDP, with support from GEF, promotes terrestrial and marine tourism in Papua New Guinea, specifically hiking around Mount Wilhelm, the country's highest peak, and diving and recreational activities in Kimbe on New Britain Island through the establishment of a locally managed marine area. An adaptative management measure is to ensure that these sites are not solely dependent on tourism and that diversified income streams are supported in order to mitigate the effects of external economic shocks. As a result, a national biodiversity fund is to be established to provide seed capital for conservation and climate-compatible business models.

74. Interventions with UNDP support are aimed at enhancing biodiversity conservation in priority landscapes in Sumatra, Indonesia, through the adoption of best management practices in protected areas and adjacent production landscapes, using tiger recovery as a key indicator of success. In Gunung Leuser National Park, one such project extended support to initiate ecotourism development in its buffer area (Telagah Village, Sei Bingei District). The project facilitated the provision of training to communities and linked up with the Simelir Erdilo Tourism Institute, which supports the advancement of ecotourism in Telagah.

## **F. Making progress on the measuring of tourism impacts for evidence-based planning and decision-making**

75. Monitoring the sustainability of tourism is essential for better public information as a basis for informed decision-making, risk management, the prioritization of more efficient actions and greater support for tourism stakeholders.

76. The majority of respondents indicated that their national tourism authority was measuring tourism impacts on a regular basis, with economic impacts being monitored the most frequently.<sup>9</sup> In addition, respondents to the survey indicated that destinations at the subnational level were playing a relevant role in monitoring the impacts of tourism.

77. In order to evaluate the success of all the facets of sustainable tourism development, new performance indicators have been established in the Austrian master plan for tourism, "Plan T". These new forward-looking data collections

<sup>9</sup> In line with the findings of the report published in 2019 by UNWTO and UNEP, entitled *Baseline Report on the Integration of Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns into Tourism Policies*, according to which the sector's environmental components were referred to in public reports only from 11 per cent of the countries studied.

include tourism acceptance rate, energy mix and energy use of accommodation facilities, as well as share of renewable energies.

78. The national tourism authority of Angola has two specific programmes aligned to its national development plan for the period 2018–2022: a programme for the development and promotion of tourist villages and a birdwatching programme. In the context of those programmes, tourism impacts are monitored regularly, based on socioeconomic indicators. The country reports that, at the subnational level, through local development plans, local directorates have been monitoring the tourism impacts of public investment and development projects, with continuous support from the national tourism authority.

## **G. Other recent and innovative advances, developments and progress towards transformative changes**

79. Austria has established a central innovation hub, Next Level Tourism Austria, at the Austrian National Tourist Office, that focuses on complex technological applications and processes for individual enterprises as well as regions. Bulgaria has an operational programme for innovations and competitiveness for the period 2014–2020, targeting mainly small and medium-sized enterprises in tourism. Myanmar has been marketing tourism and undertaking promotion activities through a digital platform since 2019.

80. Slovenia is making progress on connecting key stakeholders for the transition to the circular economy through the Strategic Research and Innovation Partnership. Portugal has a national action plan for the circular economy, which foresees the development of an agenda for tourism, as well as a circular agenda for hospitality and restaurants and several guidelines launched by the main restaurant and hospitality associations. Panama has recently announced the creation of a circular economy centre. In Mexico, in a partnership among government institutions, a model of social economy and investment for indigenous projects is being promoted to ensure a circular economy.

81. Zambia is promoting the use of biodegradable plastics in supermarkets and shops through Statutory Instrument No. 65 of 2018, which is aimed at enforcing the principle of extended producer responsibility by restricting, among other things, plastics below 30 microns in thickness. In El Salvador, there are guides for waste management at tourism events and on sustainable events that promote circularity, and training on reducing waste from tourism activities, while in Malaysia, the non-profit organization Zero Waste Malaysia has produced the Zero Waste Event Handbook.

82. In Panama, there is a certification programme for agro-ecotouristic farms which seek to generate economic alternatives that include tourist attractions, lodgings, food and cultural manifestations of the region. Training activities and technical consulting are carried out to ensure that a producer is prepared to play the role not only of agricultural producer but also of tourism entrepreneur, whereby they work hand in hand with the Panama Tourism Authority.

83. The “Serbia 2025” programme sets out a plan of investment projects for the further development of the country over the next five years that are aimed at accelerating economic growth and making the country a better place in which to live. The plan includes measures for the sustainable development of tourism, including ecotourism, the monitoring of protected areas and tourism infrastructure. A pilot multi-donor project under the programme, entitled “EU for competitiveness through innovation and tourism development”, is funded by the European Union and Germany

and implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation and the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications.

84. As reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, various systems allow the farmers at sites in the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems to share in the economic benefits arising from tourism. In Japan, for example, programmes have been developed at such sites to enable tourists to harvest or process crops, buy local produce and have their meals at local restaurants. Most of the sites provide multiple attractions, such as agricultural landscapes and products, natural environments and local cultures, as well as agricultural work experiences and local cuisine.

## **H. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and emergency preparedness responses**

85. At a time when the global community is cooperating to overcome the unprecedented social and economic aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic and getting ready to resume activities on the basis of the lessons learned from the pandemic, Member States were asked about their responses to COVID-19. Most of the surveyed countries had emergency preparedness plans in place to mitigate some of the effects of the pandemic, with tourism being part of the response mechanisms, as well as recovery plans which included sustainability criteria.

86. In El Salvador, the Ministry of Tourism is involved in two of the civil protection commissions which are activated in national emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies due to natural causes. Likewise, in Nicaragua, the tourism sector, both at the national level and in the regions, is part of the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Care and participates actively in municipal committees for disaster prevention, mitigation and care. In Egypt, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities participates in the cabinet crisis committee.

87. Countries have taken many measures, including imposing quarantine laws and health protocols, to contain the spread of COVID-19, in close collaboration with the tourism industry and other tourism stakeholders. In addition, economic, tax, legislative and sectoral measures have been taken in most countries to protect employment and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and to guide the revival of the tourism sector.

88. The recovery plan of the European Commission is worth €1.8 trillion, which includes the long-term budget for the period 2021–2027 and a new recovery instrument, “Next generation EU”, of €750 billion, which is aimed at investment in a green, digital and resilient Europe and is centred on three pillars: supporting member States in recovering; kick-starting the economy and facilitating private investment; and learning lessons from the crisis. Specifically, this means repairing the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthening economies’ resilience and remodelling the societal response to health and emergency preparedness.

89. Most of the respondents expressed the view that the COVID-19 pandemic will have an impact on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in their countries, in particular Goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), due to job losses and uncertainty, reduced income and the tremendous impact of the pandemic on businesses and tourism enterprises, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises; Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation), given that priorities may have been shifted as a result of the crisis; and Goal 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere), Goal 2

(End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture), Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

90. The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems secretariat carried out a survey on tourism, resilience and sustainability in response to the request for inputs from UNWTO. The majority of the respondents to that survey stated that the COVID-19 pandemic had had a negative impact on the regular operations of the sites in the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, attributing it to the containment measures requiring lockdowns and closures of restaurants, museums and parks.

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

91. Since the adoption of resolution [73/245](#) in 2018, countries worldwide have strengthened efforts to promote sustainable tourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection. Member States have also fostered greater awareness, coherence and enhanced coordination, both in terms of policy and operationalization, among government agencies and relevant stakeholders. Member States have highlighted the importance and contribution of sustainable tourism to national development strategies and the global development agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

92. The COVID-19 crisis has accentuated the need to strengthen the resilience of the tourism sector, highlighting both the fragility of the natural environment and the need to protect it, as well as the interlinkages between tourism economics, society and the environment. It has provided an opportunity to rebuild a robust and sustainable tourism sector, accelerating the transformation to a new model of sustainable, inclusive, low-emission and environmentally friendly development, in which people are aware of the critical interconnection between environment and health. Addressing the challenges requires comprehensive people-centred solutions.

93. Undertaking a successful transition to a more sustainable and resilient tourism model will depend largely on public-private collaboration and partnerships, social dialogue, access to science and technology as well as sufficient investment in skills development and training programmes, particularly for young people and women, in order to support the employability of workers and to meet the needs of a qualified workforce for the tourism sector.

94. As Governments address the impacts of the pandemic and devise recovery mechanisms across various interrelated economic sectors, it is crucial, in order to maximize their effectiveness, that such mechanisms are planned and implemented with the full participation of civil society, local communities and indigenous peoples, ensuring strong coordination among national, international, donor, research and other relevant organizations and integrating a gender perspective and lessons learned.

95. National disaster management agencies are encouraged to continue the development of their preparedness and response capacities, to include health emergencies as a top priority and to strengthen the participation of the tourism sector in national emergency response mechanisms. Strengthening such work through appropriate policies and financial support within a broader framework of sustainable development policies is vital.

96. The COVID-19 crisis has raised awareness of the importance of local supply chains and the need to rethink how goods and services are produced and consumed, both of which are key elements of a circular economy. Integrating circularity and further advancing resource efficiency in the tourism value chain provide an

opportunity for the tourism sector to embrace a sustained, sustainable and resilient economic growth pathway.

97. The regular and timely measurement and monitoring of tourism impacts at the destination level is seen as key to generating the necessary evidence for effective decision-making and destination management. Data on the social and environmental impacts of tourism continue to be limited and could be supported by the work of the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories. In the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, the generation of regular and timely data is crucial in order to align the recovery with ambitions on resource efficiency, climate change and biodiversity, as well as to ensure that the needs of host communities, including public health, are well integrated in destination management.

98. Addressing climate change remains a global challenge. Transforming tourism operations for climate action is critical to the sector remaining in line with international goals and accelerating emissions reductions towards a zero-carbon future. Enhancing mitigation efforts in the tourism sector, including through investment in the development of low-carbon transportation options and greener infrastructure, is key to the resilience of tourism, which is dependent on the sector's ability to balance the needs of people, planet and prosperity.

99. The COVID-19 pandemic has reaffirmed that biodiversity is fundamental to human health. Addressing global problems, such as biodiversity loss and threats to protected areas and wildlife populations, posed by habitat loss, overexploitation of wildlife and poaching is critical. Also of vital importance is mainstreaming biodiversity in sustainable tourism development to ensure the sustainable use of marine, coastal and terrestrial resources. To that end, concessions and appropriate user fee models for protected areas can enable tourism revenue to support financial investment in critical ecological areas, allowing for the responsible development of ecotourism, particularly at the community level, and promotion of greater awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation to the economy and local communities.

100. Tourism stakeholders worldwide are gradually making progress in implementing good environmental practices. There is, however, a need for greater investment in the tourism sector, as well as in capacity-building and information exchange on best practices, such as the creation of natural parks and community-based tourism, on conducting environmental impact assessments of existing tourism projects and activities and on environmental awareness-raising programmes.