

World Tourism Organization

# UNWTO



## Tourism in **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**

Building a more sustainable  
future for the people of Islands

# Tourism - Fostering growth and development

*"...Small Island Developing States face numerous challenges. For a significant number, their remoteness affects their ability to be part of the global supply chain, increases import costs - especially for energy - and limits their competitiveness in the tourist industry. Many are increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change - from devastating storms to the threat of sea level rise."*

**UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, World Environment Day (5 June 2014)**

**Tourism in the livelihoods of SIDS.** As one of the fastest growing sectors in the world, tourism has become the main economic activity for many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), creating much needed job opportunities and bringing in important income and foreign exchange earnings.

**Competing in the global market.** Tourism is often one of the few activities for which their location, coupled with exceptional natural and cultural resources, is a strong competitive advantage for SIDS.

**Significant growth.** The number of international tourists visiting SIDS destinations increased from 28 million in 2000 to 41 million in 2013. In the same period, exports from tourism grew from US\$ 26 billion to US\$ 53 billion.

**A main economic stay.** Tourism accounts for over one quarter of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in at least seven SIDS and represents 9% of the overall exports (US\$ 61 billion).

**A driver of development.** Tourism has been key in the recent graduation of Samoa, Cabo Verde and the Maldives from Least Developed Country (LDC) status.

**Building resilience.** Tourism contributes to economic resilience in SIDS. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in those SIDS where there is growing revival of tourism in the aftermath of the global economic crisis, there is growing momentum for economic recovery, leading to improved fiscal stance, more social spending, and balanced budget.

**Sustainability – the only way forward.** Their special geographical situation and their immense natural and cultural richness makes SIDS unique for visitors, but at the same time, confronts them with a number of challenges and vulnerabilities. As 'Ocean Nations', the coastal management and the safeguarding of oceans are major challenges for SIDS. Investing in sustainable tourism in the SIDS is the only path to ensure that the sector continues to advance socio-economic welfare while protecting their fragile ecosystems.

*"Tourism can play a key role in a stronger support to the development agenda of the SIDS considering that the sector is the main stay for the economies of many SIDS, and that, due to their vulnerabilities, the SIDS remain a special case for sustainable tourism development".*

**Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**



# Addressing challenges and promoting opportunities

*“The overarching challenge and opportunity for tourism in islands is to support further economic growth while protecting and benefitting island environments and communities.”*

**Wu Hongbo, UN DESA's Under-Secretary-General and Secretary-General for the Third International Conference on SIDS**

## Challenges



**Connectivity.** Tourism development in the SIDS depends on air connectivity. SIDS need competitive, frequent, reliable and fair air while increasing efforts toward emissions reduction goals. Policies on regulation and taxation of air transport should take into account the dependence of SIDS from air transport.



**Scarce and fragile natural resources.** Tourism development has to be guided by, and comply with, spatial and physical plans that take full account of the current and future capacity of an island's limited resources – especially land, water, coastline, biodiversity and energy.



**Climate Change.** While small islands only generate less than 1% of Greenhouse Gas Emissions, they face particular damage from global warming – storm surges, rising sea levels, beach erosion and coral bleaching, that directly and indirectly affect tourism.



**Leakages.** The small economic base and the land scarcity of many SIDS means that they are prone to financial leakages and sometimes to shortage of labour and skills. The contribution of tourism to GDP can be diminished by leakages of foreign exchange earnings due to imports of materials and equipment for construction, consumer goods, and repatriation of profits earned by foreign investors.



**Community Engagement.** It is essential to ensure that local communities are consulted, engaged and empowered to influence decisions on tourism development. This dialogue should engage communities in planning and decision taking on tourism at a local level, pursue equitable benefits from tourism within communities and a beneficial interaction between communities and tourists.

## Opportunities



**Employment & Women Empowerment.** Tourism is key for employment in SIDS, particularly for women – women's participation in the hotel and restaurant sector in the Caribbean ranges between 43% and 63%. Opportunities exist to further grow direct and indirect jobs through capacity building, the promotion of value chains between agriculture and tourism or handicrafts and tourism, a conducive investment framework and participatory actions.



**Promotion and protection of natural resources.** Tourism can generate income to promote and protect natural resources. It can also be an alternative economic activity to other more resource intensive ones. For example, shark watching is worth 150 times more than shark fishing. Possible negative impacts can be minimized through regulations, incentives, voluntary codes and certification programmes and the promotion of good practices.



**Blue & Green Economies.** Coastal and maritime tourism are two of SIDS's main assets. There is a major opportunity to promote an oceans' economy that makes sustainable use of oceans, invests in green technologies to reduce energy and water consumption and contributes to biodiversity conservation.



**Investment and Value Chains.** Many SIDS depend on foreign direct investment. Opportunities exist to strengthen local economic investment, including skills training. Policy makers should integrate tourism in national sustainable development plans, with an emphasis on the linkages of tourism with local economies, including infrastructure and supply chains and promote a foreign investment framework that stimulates the use of local products and skills.



**Resilience.** Tourism can strengthen SIDS resilience to natural disasters and other incidents affecting their safety, security and competitiveness through effective risk management, mitigation and communications. To that end it is central to have research-based information and guidance on the impact of climate change on tourism; implement adaptation measures, and pursue low carbon strategies.

Addressing the challenges above and seizing the opportunities presented by sustainable tourism in SIDS requires strong governance, including cross-cutting tourism policies, participatory frameworks and enhanced public-private partnerships. Further opportunities exist for SIDS to promote socio-economic growth, resilience and sustainability through regional integration and cooperation.

**Governance, Private Sector Engagement and Community Development.** SIDS need to establish specific governance and management structures for tourism, which engage tourism, environment, culture, transport, trade and industry, planning and

development responsibilities and expertise, and enable a participatory approach and fostering meaningful partnerships between the public and private sectors and local communities.

**Regional Cooperation.** Strengthen the coordination of tourism policies and actions within groups of SIDS, to gain economies of scale in tourism management, share information and knowledge, and, as integrated regional destinations, achieve a higher profile in the marketplace.

# Building Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism Development in the SIDS

Global challenges demand global solutions. Most of the challenges facing sustainable development in SIDS are cross cutting in nature and require an integrated approach and new governance models at national, but also at international level, engaging public and private sectors as well as civil society. UNWTO is currently engaged in Delivering-as-One for tourism through several initiatives and partnerships within the UN system as well with the private sector.



On the initiative of UNWTO, nine UN agencies and programmes – ILO, ITC, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, WTO – have come together to coordinate their tourism-related work under the UN Steering Committee on Tourism for Development (SCTD).

The SCTD brings together the experience and expertise of each members to create synergies and a more coordinated, effective and efficient delivery of technical assistance in tourism to developing countries, complementing their efforts to build up a competitive national tourism sector.



The Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism is a global initiative launched in 2011 to promote sustainability in the mainstream of tourism policies, development, and operations. It emerged as a more permanent successor to the International Task Force on Sustainable Tourism Development (ITF-STD). UNWTO is one of the UN bodies taking part of this Partnership, together with UNEP, UNCTAD, UNIDO and UNESCO.

## 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP)

Sustainable tourism is among the five initial programmes to be developed within the 10YFP, opening important opportunities for the UN system and Member States to advance SIDS specific lines of action that support sustainable tourism in those countries.



UNWTO works in close cooperation with the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) to promote tourism as a main driver of economic development and sustainability. WTTC gathers the Chairs, Presidents and CEOs of one hundred of the world's foremost Travel & Tourism companies.

## Further resources

Challenges and Opportunities for Tourism in Small Island Developing States, UNWTO, 2012:

<http://www2.unwto.org/en/publication/challenges-and-opportunities-tourism-development-small-island-developing-states-0>

Reunion Island Declaration on Sustainable Tourism in Islands:

[http://www.sids2014.org/content/documents/269reunion\\_declaration\\_final\\_en\\_0.pdf](http://www.sids2014.org/content/documents/269reunion_declaration_final_en_0.pdf)

The Nassau Declaration:

[http://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/nassaudeclarationfinal\\_en.pdf](http://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/nassaudeclarationfinal_en.pdf)

Declaration of Barbados:

<http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?menu=1512>

Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States: /

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.167/9](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.167/9) (Annex II)

Mauritius Declaration:

[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.207/L.6](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.207/L.6)

Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.207/11](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.207/11) (Chapter 1)

Note: This publication uses the list of SIDS as per the definition of the UN Office of the High Representatives for the Least Developed which includes a total of 57 SIDS.

UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) C/ Capitán Haya 42. 28020 Madrid, August 2014 – [www.unwto.org](http://www.unwto.org)

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) ((sub)totals including estimates for countries with missing data), 2013<sup>abc</sup>

	International tourism								
	Population	Visitors			Receipts			int. passenger transport	
		1,000	Overnight visitors (1000)	Cruise per 100 passengers population	in destination		% of exports	(US\$ mn)	% of exports
					(1000)	(US\$ mn)			
World	7,162,119	1,086,000	15		1,193,000	167	5.1	216,000	0.9
<i>SIDS according to UN-OHRLLS</i>	<i>67,320</i>	<i>40,838</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>&gt; 18 mn</i>	<i>53,418</i>	<i>793</i>	<i>8.2</i>	<i>8,019</i>	<i>1.2</i>
<i>- definition DESA</i>	<i>60,050</i>	<i>30,274</i>	<i>50</i>		<i>40,032</i>	<i>667</i>	<i>6.5</i>	<i>6,635</i>	<i>1.1</i>
<b>Caribbean</b>	39,058	13,943	36		15,213	389	23.5	813	1.3
Antigua, Barb	90	244	271	534	299	3,318	55.0	..	..
Bahamas	377	1,363	361	4,709	2,162	5,728	61.8	20	0.6
Barbados	285	509	179	570	912	3,203	53.5	19a	1.1a
Belize	332	294	89	641a	351	1,057	33.2	..	..
Cuba	11,266	2,829	25	3a	2,344	208	13.1	283	1.6
Dominica	72	78	109	231	82	1,138	41.2	..	..
Dominican Rp	10,404	4,690	45	424	5,065	487	32.0	..	..
Grenada	106	114	108	243a	120	1,135	63.1	..	..
Guyana	800	177a	22a	..	77	96	5.0	..	..
Haiti	10,317	420	4	610a	568	55	36.6	..	..
Jamaica	2,784	2,008	72	1,265	2,074	745	47.6	47b	1.1b
St. Kitts-Nev	54	107	197	526a	101	1,865	39.5	..	..
Saint Lucia	182	319	175	594	354	1,942	60.0	..	..
St. Vincent, Grenadines	109	72	66	126	92	844	48.1	..	..
Suriname	539	249	46	..	84	156	3.3	8	0.3
Trinidad Tbg	1,341	402b	30b	49a	472b	354b	2.3b	178b	0.9b
<b>AIMS<sup>2</sup></b>	10,225	14,834	145		23,285	2,277	4.3	5,525	1.0
Cabo Verde	499	503	101	..	462	926	64.3	49	6.8
Comoros	735	19b	3b	..	39a	54a	44.2a	..	..
Guinea-Bissau	1,704	..	..	..	9b	6b	3.2b	0c	..
Maldives	345	1,125	326	2	2,031	5,887	75.0	25a	1.1a
Mauritius	1,244	993	80	9	1,321	1,062	21.0	273	4.3
Sao Tome Prn	193	12b	7b	..	14a	76a	43.9a	..	..
Seychelles	93	230	248	8a	344	3,701	31.7	41a	4.4a
Singapore	5,412	11,899	220	..	19,057	3,521	3.6	..	..
<b>Pacific</b>	10,766	1,497	14		1,534	142	16.1	297	3.1
Cook Is	21	121	587	..	110c	5423c	56.2c	..	..
Fiji	881	658	75	80a	716	813	30.9	249	10.7
Kiribati	102	6	6	..	..	..	..	..	..
Marshall Is	53	5a	9a	..	4a	71a	15.1a	..	..
Micronesia (Fed.St.of)	104	42	41	..	23a	219a	41c	..	..
Nauru	10	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Niue	1	7	524	..	2b	1373b	..	..	..
Palau	21	105	502	..	133a	6394a	..	..	..
Papua New Guinea	7,321	171	2	..	2a	0.3a	0.03a	0.05a	0.001a
Samoa	190	116	61	..	136	715	54.9a	0.2a	0.1a
Solomon Is	561	24	4	..	69	123	12.1	15b	2.8b
Timor-Leste	1,133	78	7	..	21a	19a	21a	..	..
Tonga	105	48	46	11a	41a	386a	43.8a	2a	2a
Tuvalu	10	1b	12b	..	..	..	..	..	..
Vanuatu	253	110	44	243	261a	1056a	69.3a	27a	7.2a

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Small Island Developing States (SIDS) ((sub)totals including estimates for countries with missing data), 2013<sup>abc</sup>

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		1,000	Overnight visitors (1000)	Cruise per 100 population passengers (1000)	in destination		% of exports	(US\$ mn)	% of exports
					(US\$ mn)	per capita US\$			
<b>Other SIDS UN-OHRLLS</b>	7,270	10,564	145		13,386	1,841	42.1	1,384	4.4
American Samoa	55	22a	39a	30a	..	..	..	..	..
Anguilla	14	69	483	2c	122	8,513	87.0	..	..
Aruba	103	979	952	688	1,503	14,603	69.4	10	0.5
Bahrain	1,332	1,069	80	..	1051a	798a	4.7a	691a	3.1a
Bermuda	65	236	362	340	437	6,688	31.4	7a	0.5a
Br. Virgin Is	28	356	1,255	367	397a	14134a	..	..	..
Cayman Islands	58	345	591	1,376	480a	8333a	..	..	..
Curaçao	159	440	277	584	583	3,674	25.5	195	8.5
French Polynesia	277	164	59	..	438a	1599a	34.4a	..	..
Guadeloupe	466	418b	91b	105c	583b	1265b	..	..	..
Guam	165	1,334	808	..	..	..	..	..	..
Martinique	404	490	121	94a	462a	1147a	..	..	..
Montserrat	5	7	141	0.4	8	1,490	41.0	..	..
New Caledonia	256	108	42	386	152a	599a	8.1a	..	..
N. Mariana Is	54	336b	631b	5b	..	..	..	..	..
Puerto Rico	3,688	3,200	87	1,038	3,334	904	..	..	..
Turks, Caicos	33	291	878	779	..	..	..	..	..
US. Virgin Is	107	580a	545a	1,999	1013c	9522c	..	..	..

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©

(Data as collected by UNWTO August 2014)

<sup>1</sup> according to UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) at <http://unohrls.org/about-sids/country-profiles> (August 2014).

<sup>2</sup> The AIMS abbreviation refers to the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea, although there are currently no SIDS in the Mediterranean.

<sup>abc</sup> figures for 2013 or for last year with data available: <sup>a</sup> 2012; <sup>b</sup> 2011; <sup>c</sup> 2010