A central element of the Green Economy Initiative launched by the UN in 2009 is the Green Economy Report (GER) which looks beyond a short term response to the financial and economic crisis. The GER makes a case for, and provides guidance on investing in specific environmentally significant sectors, such as tourism, as a medium and long-term economic strategy.

According to the 2011 Green Economy Report, tourism is one of the most promising drivers of growth for the world economy and, with the appropriate investment, can continue to grow steadily over the coming decades, contributing to much-needed economic growth, employment and development while mitigating its environmental impacts.

Tourism in the green economy refers to tourism activities that can be maintained in their social, economic, cultural and environmental context and therefore supports and reinforces the concept of sustainable tourism. Tourism faces a multitude of sustainability related challenges such as energy, greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, waste management, loss of biological diversity, effective management of cultural and natural heritage. It also needs to integrate, especially in developing countries, a poverty reduction approach.

The UNWTO High-Level Regional Conference on Green Tourism will introduce the main findings of the research on tourism as a green economy sector; highlight the main challenges and opportunities facing the public and private sector, and present national experiences on how sustainable development of tourism and green economy can go hand-in-hand with sustaining economic development in Asia and the Pacific.