



**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
AFRICA**



**AFRICAN SUSTAINABLE  
AND RESPONSIBLE  
TOURISM CHARTER**

# Introduction

Tourism is increasingly being recognized as a major profit-generating sector for national economies, and also as a vital source of foreign currency income for the development of countries and the improvement of the livelihood of local communities and low-income groups. Statistics as regards international tourism in 2015 show that 1186 million visitors travelled worldwide and that international tourism receipts reached US\$ 1260 billion. UNWTO expects these figures to increase in the coming years and the number of tourists should therefore grow to reach 1.8 billion by 2030. Ergo, tourism confirms its major role in the international economy by accounting, on average, for 10% of GDP, and creating one out of eleven jobs (direct, indirect, and induced), which represents 7% of the world's exports and 30% of exports in services.

In Africa, about 53 million tourists visited the continent (compared to 26 million tourists in 2000), which allowed generating US\$ 33 billion in receipts. The region represents a small share of international tourism (5%) despite its important potential as regards natural and cultural resources. However, UNWTO expects about 134 million international tourists to visit Africa by 2030.

Mindful of this potential, an increasing number of African countries have made tourism a key driver of their socio-economic development. This is reflected, besides the aforementioned figures, in the proliferation of tourism development plans and strategies in the continent.

However, an unsustainable tourism development may jeopardize the perpetuation of the positive tourism dynamics that Africa is supposed to enhance and accelerate. That is why it is important that tourism thrives "reasonably" in a continent where natural potentials are numerous and diversified, and where cultural and human riches are abundant, while taking account of the various issues as regards respecting natural equilibrium, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving and promoting cultural specificities, and perpetuating tourism receipts.

Therefore, adopting and perpetuating the principles of sustainability in all the tourism value chain is a sine qua non of consolidating the results that Africa achieved and meeting the objective of reaching 134 million tourist arrivals by 2030. While recognizing the right of development for all countries, the African Sustainable Tourism Charter serves as a voluntary framework that monitors tourism development in Africa, ensures its integration in a sustainable and responsible dynamic based on economic and social progress, preserves the environment, and respects local characteristics and cultural diversity.

This jointly drawn up Charter takes into account the UN Sustainable Development Program by 2030 and international agreements and conventions as regards sustainable development, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals, UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, and UNESCO's and IUCN's international conventions. It is based on a shared vision by several African countries that are seeking to foster a tourism "that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities." (UNWTO). This commitment was taken following a proposal by the Moroccan government at the 58<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Africa held in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016, during which the idea to draw up an "African Sustainable and Responsible Charter," inspired by the Moroccan Sustainable Tourism Charter, was unanimously approved (decision CAF/58/9). Organizing the 22<sup>nd</sup> UN Climate Change Conference (COP 22) in Morocco offers a real opportunity to ensure the Charter's implementation and promotion.

The African Sustainable Tourism Charter features 6 areas of activity, each of which is composed of generic principles that take account of Africa's "plurality" and the diversity of its countries. Each country, or groups of countries, that signed the Charter can implement it according to their national or regional characteristics.

Similarly, appropriate funding, monitoring, and implementation mechanisms will be jointly developed so as to help Signatories comply with the provisions of this Charter.

<sup>1</sup> Particularly the 1972 Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

<sup>2</sup> Particularly the 2010 Convention on Biological Diversity

# PRINCIPLE 1: SAFEGUARDING AND DEVELOPING THE NATURAL HERITAGE

1. Enhance the conservation of biodiversity, particularly in protected landscape and seascape;
2. Preserve endangered species (individual species and endemic habitats) and protect them from the tourism industry's adverse effects, particularly by setting up awareness measures;
3. Raise awareness of and fight against the various forms of poaching, particularly of protected animal species, in collaboration with the countries sources of the protected species product demand;
4. Increase cross-border initiatives and agreements that aim at conserving biodiversity;
5. Ratify and comply with international and regional conventions and agreements related to biodiversity and environmental protection;
6. Comply with the national laws and regulations as regards preserving the environment when developing and marketing tourism products;
7. Take systematically account of biodiversity and natural heritage conservation issues in each new law related to the tourism industry;
8. Integrate, in various scales development strategies, the balance between protected areas and extractive industries;
9. Condition developing any tourism project in environmentally fragile areas to preliminary rigorous impact assessments;
10. Implement climate change mitigation and carbon compensation measures at national and cross-border levels;
11. Reduce the tourism industry's carbon footprint and implement mitigation and compensation measures;
12. Promote initiatives that aim at reducing greenhouse gas emissions caused by the increasing threats in fragile areas;
13. Increase measures to sensitise and inform tourists and all tourism stakeholders about the importance of preserving natural heritage;
14. Set a "tolerance threshold" of the tourism industry at the level of fragile areas;
15. Develop strategies specific to water use rationalisation for tourism purposes, particularly in arid and semi-arid countries and regions;
16. Raise tourism stakeholders' awareness of rationalising the use of natural resources and optimising the management of waste caused by the tourism industry in cooperation with governments and civil society;
17. Support and build tourism stakeholders' institutional and technical capacity in preserving and developing the natural heritage;
18. Promote the participation of local communities in the programmes and projects related to the preservation and development of natural sites and areas.

# PRINCIPLE 2: PRESERVING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE LOCAL IDENTITY

1. Preserve and promote the tangible and intangible local cultural heritage;
2. Raise the various tourism stakeholders' awareness, including the host community, of the importance of protecting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage;
3. Set a "tolerance threshold" of the tourism industry at the level of endangered cultural sites;
4. Conserve the local architectural and urban heritage and rehabilitate it;
5. Promote sustainable construction that is adapted to the local natural, economic, and socio cultural contexts;
6. Raise awareness of and fight against thieving objects of cultural value;
7. Preserve and promote local arts and cultures;
8. Preserve and promote local folklore and prevent its trivialization and loss of identity for tourism purposes;
9. Ensure spreading African cultures and promote their plurality;
10. Protect local languages and dialects and promote them through tourism;
11. Ensure the protection and the promotion of ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity;
12. Raise tourists' awareness of the importance of respecting the customs of host communities and indigenous peoples;
13. Promote the use of local products and handicrafts with strong cultural content in the field of tourism;
14. Strengthen partnerships with other African countries as regards preserving and promoting the continent's common heritage.

# PRINCIPLE 3: INTEGRATING LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMY

1. Strengthen the role of tourism as a driver of local development;
2. Promote local and self-employment in the field of tourism;
3. Encourage the development of VSEs/SMEs by offering them incentives;
4. Optimise the benefits of tourism for the regions and local communities which must be consulted on all tourism development projects affecting them;
5. Involve local authorities and local NGOs in all tourism reflections or strategies that interest them;
6. Ensure that tourism projects and concepts are consistent with the local characteristics of the regions where they are developed;
7. Promote and strengthen tourism project managers' capacities as regards sustainable tourism, particularly the youth, women, and the disabled;
8. Promote continuous training for tourism professionals and various stakeholders, particularly SMEs;
9. Develop technical or financial support mechanisms that allow tourism stakeholders to improve their competitiveness and take account of sustainability considerations;
10. Favour the exchange of expertise within and between countries and the development of common training platforms.

# PRINCIPLE 4: DIVERSIFYING TOURISM AND ITS INTEGRATION IN A "GREEN" AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

1. Develop well-defined tourism strategies that aim at deriving the maximum benefit from growth opportunities, while integrating them in a sustainable development approach;
2. Integrate developing regions' tourism in economic and urban development strategies;
3. Distribute equitably the tourism development to the various regions and population groups, particularly to host communities;
4. Opt for complementarity and diversification concepts of tourism products;
5. Promote less developed regions to make tourism a sustainable source of growth;
6. Promote green innovations in the field of tourism;
7. Ensure developing connections between tourism and other sectors of the economy, with a view to developing a green growth;
8. Enhance academic training in the professions of tourism tailored to the green and sustainable economy;
9. Strengthen laws and regulations that aim at integrating tourism as part of a green economy.

# PRINCIPLE 5: EQUITY, ETHICS, AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. Promote and implement gender equality in all tourism development and promotion forms;
2. Promote women's empowerment and rights;
3. Protect children from all forms of exploitation, particularly economic or sexual ones caused by tourism;
4. Take into account the specificities of the different types of disabilities, and institute actions and measures to facilitate the access of all people with special needs to tourism;
5. Ensure the liberty of tourist movements and avoid any discriminatory restrictions;
6. Ensure the protection of tourists and visitors and their belongings, and protect them from any danger or risk;
7. Ensure full transparency of business relations, and ban all forms of corruption or unethical practices;
8. Facilitate access of tourism to various population groups, particularly youth, families, pensioners, the disabled, and low-income earners.



# PRINCIPLE 6: GOVERNANCE AND SUCCESS FACTORS

1. Ensure the good governance of the tourism sector and develop representative systems that allow an effective involvement of stakeholders in decision-making as regards the sector;
2. Promote the development of professional associations and civil society;
3. Promote strategic and network partnerships at different scales;
4. Adopt approaches that encourage corporate social responsibility and promote labels and distinctions to that end;
5. Promote the creation of funding mechanisms to finance tourism firms that are part of a sustainability approach;
6. Condition subsidies and other funding measures intended for tourism stakeholders to complying with sustainability's minimum standards;
7. Acknowledge and promote tourism initiatives and stakeholders that are part of a sustainability approach;
8. Develop sustainability indicators and standards related to the tourism sector;
9. Develop mechanisms and procedures to ascertain that the Charter's principles are well implemented.