



2017  
INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
FOR DEVELOPMENT



## Manila Call for Action

on

# Measuring Sustainable Tourism

We, the representatives of tourism, economic, environmental and other related administrations, statistical institutes, international and regional organizations, the private sector, the academia and civil society, gathered at the 6th UNWTO International Conference on Tourism Statistics: Measuring Sustainable Tourism, organized by the Government of the Philippines and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on 21-23 June 2017 in Manila, the Philippines, and on the occasion of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017:

1. Acknowledge that sustainable tourism contributes to the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – and to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as affirmed by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly when announcing the adoption of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017<sup>1</sup>.
2. Draw attention to the fact that tourism has become one of the fastest growing and most important economic sectors in the world, benefiting destinations and communities worldwide. With over 1.2 billion international overnight visitors and many more domestic visitors in 2016, the sector represents an estimated 10% of the world's GDP and 1 in 10 jobs globally. This growth comes with the need to uphold the foundations of prosperity for tourism destinations: the rich natural resources of our planet and its diverse cultural heritage.
3. Recall that sustainable tourism is defined as “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”<sup>2</sup>. Sustainable tourism should thus make optimal use of environmental resources, respect host communities and ensure viable, long-term economic operations so that benefits are equitably distributed among all stakeholders.

4. Recognize that sustainable tourism drives inclusive economic growth and social development by promoting entrepreneurship, creating jobs and fighting poverty, and can also encourage environmental protection, consideration of climate, cultural heritage preservation, and stronger peace and mutual understanding around the world, whilst leaving no one behind.
5. Recall that with the adoption of several UN General Assembly resolutions on the importance of sustainable tourism as a tool for development<sup>3</sup>, the need to better understand and track progress towards a sustainable global tourism sector is more pressing now than ever.
6. Are mobilized by the strong conviction that credible and comprehensive data on sustainable tourism is key for effective evidence-based policies and management in order to surmount current challenges and capitalize on opportunities.
7. Appreciate the achievements made in tourism measurement over the past decades, in particular the two official UN statistical frameworks for measuring tourism adopted in 2008: the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008<sup>4</sup> and the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008<sup>5</sup>. Together, these statistical frameworks enable countries to produce data that is credible and comparable –across countries, over time and in concert with other standards. These frameworks help integrate and organize data for the purposes of deriving indicators such as tourism GDP.
8. Advocate for the development of a Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST Framework) that extends the current frameworks beyond their primarily economic focus, in order to incorporate environmental, social and cultural dimensions, across commonly agreed spatial levels (global, national and sub-national) and paying attention to temporal considerations.
9. Strongly believe that developing and implementing an MST Framework is the critical next step in understanding, analysing and supporting universal, cross-sectoral, sustainable tourism policies and practices that work from an integrated, coherent and robust information base.
10. Underline that the benefits of an MST Framework for decision makers and other stakeholders include:
  - The provision of a common language for discussing sustainable tourism within the tourism sector and with other key policy areas such as planning, industry, infrastructure, environment, social affairs, finance and central banks;
  - The capacity to compare the performance of the tourism sector and the impacts of different policies on a consistent basis with other sectors and in different destinations and countries;
  - The provision of a basis for improving co-ordination in data collection and compilation, as well as for improving institutional arrangements for the governance and management of statistics on sustainable tourism;
  - The provision of a single, coherent and comprehensive picture of the state of sustainable tourism and its trends, in all its dimensions and across commonly agreed spatial scales.

11. Welcome the preliminary draft of the MST Framework as a launch pad with which to further the global discussion, and appreciate the significant progress achieved to date through pilot studies and other relevant work at international, national and subnational levels (including local levels) presented at this Conference. This reaffirms our conviction that an MST Framework is not only highly relevant but also feasible and most welcome.
12. Emphasize that information from the Framework will improve our ability to support discussion on vital and urgent policy issues on sustainable tourism; including:
  - The use of resources for tourism purposes, including use of energy, water and land (such as rivers, lakes and coastal areas, protected areas and wildlife)
  - The management of solid waste, wastewater, emissions and pollution from tourism activity
  - Infrastructure needs concerning transport, water, energy and waste
  - Benefits and impacts of tourism on local communities, as well as on natural, cultural and heritage sites
  - Tourism concentration and congestion in both mature and emerging destinations
13. Acknowledge that designing and implementing an MST Framework is a priority in the context of measuring progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in response to the needs of governments and tourism stakeholders.
14. Recall that the United Nations recognizes UNWTO as the appropriate organization to collect, analyze, publish, standardize and improve the statistics of tourism globally, and to promote the integration of these statistics within the sphere of the UN system<sup>6</sup>. In so doing, UNWTO works under the leadership of the UN Statistical Commission, with the assistance of the UN Statistical Division and in close cooperation with country experts and with other international organizations including ILO, OECD and Eurostat.
15. Appreciate the work of UNWTO as the leading UN Specialized Agency for tourism in advancing the development of an MST Framework through the Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism, under the auspices of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account, and in close cooperation with relevant partners and experts.
16. Welcome the support from the UN Statistical Commission<sup>7</sup>, the highest decision-making body in statistics globally, in developing an MST Framework that includes indicators for sustainable tourism, measurement at sub-national level and pilot projects, as well as the development of a compilation guide for the Tourism Satellite Account and a technical note linking the Tourism Satellite Account and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting.
17. Call upon all actors to facilitate the necessary means and resources for the development and subsequent in-country implementation of an MST Framework, noting the opportunities to tap into the richness of data currently available and identifying gaps for producing any additional data that may be needed.

18. Stress the need for building capacity towards measuring sustainable tourism, taking into account the constraints and challenges of implementing statistical systems in developing and developed countries.
19. Recognize with regard to data collection that all possible sources should be taken into account, including census, survey-based, administrative and innovative sources (e.g. big data).
20. Encourage an MST Framework to be presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission for its consideration in the UN Statistical Commission's fifty-first session, to be held in 2020.
21. Emphasize that, beyond being a technical exercise, the development and implementation of an MST Framework is a strategic and ongoing endeavour, requiring wide and consistent stakeholder engagement, collaboration, inter-institutional coordination and political leadership.
22. Welcome the establishment by UNWTO of a special funding mechanism through voluntary contributions for the purpose of the further development and implementation of the Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism<sup>8</sup>.

During this 6th International Conference on Tourism Statistics: Measuring Sustainable Tourism in Manila, Philippines, we unite political commitment and gather technical expertise to call for the development and implementation of a Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism that includes economic, environmental and social dimensions across relevant spatial levels (global, national and subnational). We call upon other governments and administrations at national and sub-national levels, international organizations, academia, private sector organizations and civil society to join our efforts.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our host, the Government of the Philippines, for its warm hospitality and excellent support and arrangements for the organization of the Conference, as well as its significant contribution to advancing the sustainable tourism agenda as a driver for sustainable development.

Manila, Philippines, 23 June 2017

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<sup>1</sup> UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/193 adopted on 22 December 2015. See <http://statistics.unwto.org/mst> for further information and for links to the documents mentioned in this call for action.

<sup>2</sup> Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers, UNEP and UNWTO, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> For example resolution A/RES/69/233 (19 December 2014) which encouraged the promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection, and resolution A/RES/70/1 (25 September 2015) on Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations and World Tourism Organization. International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008, (New York, Madrid, 2008). Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/tourism/manual.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Commission of the European Communities. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, World Tourism Organization, United Nations. Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 (Luxembourg, Madrid, New York, Paris, 2008). Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/tourism/manual.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Resolution A/RES/58/232 adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 23 December 2003.

<sup>7</sup> At its 48th Session (7-10 March 2017) during the discussion on the [Report of the World Tourism Organization on tourism statistics](#) and contained in Decision 48/115.

<sup>8</sup> Such a special funding mechanism would operate under UNWTO's Financial Rules and Regulations.