



COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS AND TOURISM SATELLITE ACCOUNT

Eighteenth meeting

UNWTO Headquarters, Madrid, Spain
27-28 February 2018

Outcomes

The eighteenth meeting of the Committee took place in Madrid in 27-28 February 2018, at UNWTO Headquarters, Spain. 10. This meeting was the largest Committee meeting to ever take place, gathering over 70 participants from 24 countries, including 10 out of the 12 official members¹ of the Committee and non-UNWTO-member States Canada and Sweden, as well as several UNWTO Affiliate Members, including the representative of the Affiliate Members and other representatives from academia, the private sector, tourism observatories and regional tourism administrations. The UN Statistics Division (UNSD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Eurostat also participated.

Opening and statement by the Chairs

The meeting was opened by the UNWTO Secretary-General, the Co-Chairs Austria and Spain, and the Vice-Chair Georgia. All emphasized the unique and important role of the Committee in advancing the measurement of tourism in all its facets, through worldwide consensus building. The UNWTO Secretary-General pointed out the importance of statistics as a unique value proposition for Member States.

3. The increasing relevance of tourism statistics in the era of the SDGs

Austria presented a summary of the past milestones and work carried out by the Committee in the last two years, as well as the work ahead in the coming years. In his presentation, the Austrian representative **highlighted** UNWTO's role and responsibility in leading tourism statistics worldwide, and placed particular emphasis on UNWTO's mandate and role in the UN 2030 Agenda and the need to monitor tourism towards achieving the SDG through statistically based indicators as requested by the UN General Assembly.

The UNWTO Secretariat shared a brief note regarding the UNWTO report presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission and the subsequent discussion, the decisions taken in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolutions, and the Lunchtime Seminar "Accounting and Statistics for Sustainable Tourism", organized in the framework of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

The Philippines provided an update on the monitoring of the SDGs in the country and highlighted the need to identify priorities within the Tier II and Tier III SDG indicators. Moreover, it **invited** UNWTO to provide support and technical assistance in this matter.

¹ Austria, Brazil, Chile, France, Georgia, India, Mozambique, Peru, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Spain

Austria **announced** the creation of a sub-group to the Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism focusing on “Tourism SDG Indicators”, and offered to lead this sub-group. The Committee **agreed** to this proposal and stressed the importance of considering not only the 3 indicators for which UNWTO is custodian agency, but also complementary indicators towards a more comprehensive monitoring of the role of tourism across the Goals.

4. Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST): A statistical initiative to support the assessment and policy of sustainable tourism

Austria **reaffirmed** the importance of the Measuring Sustainable Tourism initiative calling it a feasible, operational and practical tool with mainly three pillars of work: (i) a statistical framework, (ii) an implementation strategy which covers pilot studies, compilation guidance, technical assistance and capacity building, and (iii) the data compilation into a global dataset including the SDGs indicators.

In its presentation on “Measuring Sustainable Tourism – Why the interest in Canada?” Canada **stressed** the relevance of establishing a statistical framework, a common language that enables comparability of data across jurisdictions, credibility of data and comparability of sectors, and collaboration with users. This will help to improve policies and decision-making in tourism and sustainability.

The UNWTO Head of Communications presented the key elements for a communication strategy for the Measuring Sustainable Tourism initiative, and invited members of the Committee to join a sub-group to the Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism focusing on Communication. A number of members **noted** the importance of effectively communicating in order to gain visibility and support for the Measuring Sustainable Initiative. Sweden **expressed** its interest to be part of the sub-group and announced its plan to complete a first phase of its MST Pilot Study in June 2018.

Italy, Mexico, Philippines and Saudi Arabia **showed** the progress achieved in their ongoing pilot studies and highlighted the value of continuing to advance with the pilot studies and present findings to demonstrate the feasibility and usefulness of the Measuring Sustainable Tourism initiative.

A staged implementation strategy of the Measuring Sustainable Tourism initiative was presented by Canada and welcomed by the Committee members. Austria **proposed** the creation of a sub-group to define further the implementation strategy, and encouraged other interested countries to participate. The Committee **agreed** that this sub-group would be led by Canada.

In the discussion regarding the updated draft of the Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism, members **expressed** support for continuing to develop and build the statistical framework, however also **recognized** the challenges of integrating and consolidating a framework based on the three dimensions and at the different territorial levels. The ILO stated its support and willingness to cooperate in building the statistical framework. The UN Statistical Division suggested to increase the visibility of the process towards developing the statistical framework by setting up a smaller group of people to comment on and review the current draft of the Statistical Framework and also recommended to set up a timeline with all the steps until the target year, 2020. The Committee **recalled** that the statistical framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism is a work in progress and encouraged countries and other participants to contribute with their comments and additional feedback on the draft of the Statistical Framework to the UNWTO Secretariat. The UNWTO Secretariat encouraged collaboration and engagement from Committee members to address the current challenges mentioned in the discussion, as well as to continue to work together in refining the statistical framework. Mexico presented the progress towards its System of Statistical and Geographical Information on Tourism, which the Committee commended as a world-class example recognizing the strategic nature of tourism

statistics with strong institutional, legal and management underpinnings. A tentative timeline for developing the Statistical Framework has been presented by the UNWTO Secretariat and **agreed upon** by the Committee.

In a similar vein, the Regional Government of Andalusia presented the models of integrated tourism in the Mediterranean Plus (Mitomed+) project that supports the development of reliable data to improve sustainability in regions.

5. Tourism's role in the economy: reflecting on a decade of TSA

The Committee commemorated the 10-year anniversary of the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 as a UN statistical standard. The Committee **stressed** that the TSA and its implementation in countries, needs to be seen as an ongoing process. The members **recognized** the clear enthusiasm and interest of countries in advancing the TSA, and the fact that the TSA Recommended Methodological Framework allows a flexible and staged implementation, depending on the countries' priorities and possibilities. The Committee **agreed** to move forward with the proposal of estimating Tourism Direct GDP with limited data based on the TSA conceptual framing and using the most commonly available data, but not requiring full TSA compilation. The Committee recognized that this could represent an opportunity to increase worldwide coverage in the short term of a key SDG tourism indicator: Tourism Direct GDP. The Committee **took note** of the need to proceed with careful management of expectations and clear communication of this topic.

6. Developing platforms for tourism statistics

The Committee **congratulated** Mexico for the ambitious work embodied in the Mexican System of Statistical and Geographical Information on Tourism, noting the importance of strengthening coherence across the state and local levels for more powerful tourism information that adequately serves the needs of stakeholders at different spatial levels. The importance of a legal basis, of implementing approved methodologies, of strengthening technical and technological capacity, and of streamlining the different information systems into one was also noted. The Committee also **welcomed** the work of Andalucía and Necstour in the area of access to data as part of the Smart Specialization Platform of the European Commission, as a great opportunity to better respond to SME's and destination needs, and foster better joint management of tourism.

7. Cooperation between international organizations

The Committee **stressed** the importance for international organizations to exchange of data and better coordinate statistical activities in order to avoid duplication of work and reporting burden of countries. The international organizations present, notably UNSD, ILO, OECD, WTO, Eurostat and UNWTO agreed to explore ways to work more narrowly together to achieve this.

8. Looking at the potential of big data for tourism statistics

The Committee welcomed the work of Eurostat on big data and supported the initiative to advance on a joint Eurostat/UNWTO publication to outline the potential of big data for tourism statistics in a worldwide context. Countries **shared** their experiences and main challenges with big data, while **calling** for more dissemination of case studies and best practices in the future

Provisional decisions by the Executive Council:

- *Expresses its appreciation* for the hard work, dedication and accomplishments of the Committee;
- *Supports* the Committee's work on Measuring Sustainable Tourism, including the development of a statistical framework according to the timeline presented, the design of an implementation strategy, and the steps taken towards extending the UNWTO database to incorporate MST data including SDG tourism indicators;
- *Commends* the pioneering work of countries and subnational regions in developing pilot studies on Measuring Sustainable Tourism;
- *Encourages* the Committee, with the support of the Secretariat, to continue liaising with the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to ensure the technical soundness and feasibility of indicators for monitoring the role of tourism in the SDGs;
- *Notes* the 10-year anniversary of the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 (TSA: RMF 2008) and urges its continued implementation in countries through capacity building, technical assistance and the development of the TSA Compilation Guide; and
- *Supports* the Committee and the Secretary-General in their intention to prioritize advancing statistical data collection and analysis, and making statistics a strategic value proposition for UNWTO Member States.