

UNWTO Regional Seminar on Climate Change, Biodiversity & Sustainable Tourism Development

Nadi, Fiji, 18 June 2018

TECHNICAL NOTE

1. Background

The growing international awareness about the fast pace of **climate change and biodiversity loss** taking place on our planet, together with the impacts that such changes are having on the natural environment, on humans and their livelihoods, have become evident. For tourism, climate change and biodiversity loss is not an abstract concept, but a phenomenon that already affects the sector and certain destinations in particular, mountain regions and coastal destinations.

An agreeable climate is an essential resource for tourism, especially for beach, nature and winter sport tourism segments. Changing climate and weather patterns at tourist destinations and tourist generating countries can significantly affect the tourists' comfort and their travel decisions. Changing demand patterns and tourist flows will have impacts on tourism businesses and on host communities, as well as knock off effects on related sectors such as agriculture, handicrafts and construction. In small island states and developing countries, where tourism is a major economic activity, any significant reduction in tourist arrivals will have serious employment impacts and a decline in economic prosperity.

Since the 1st International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism, convened by UNWTO in Djerba, Tunisia in 2003, a growing body of knowledge has been generated addressing the complex relationships between the tourism sector and climate change. There is now a wide recognition of the urgent need for international organizations, national governments and the tourism industry to develop and implement strategies to face the changing climate conditions and to take preventive actions for future effects, as well as to reduce tourism's contribution to greenhouse gas emission.

Furthermore, Fiji is the first Small Island Developing State (SIDS) to preside over the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Further to COP21 and the ratification of the Paris Agreement by all parties, Fiji's presidency over COP23 (Bonn, Germany, 6-17 November 2017) was a legitimate choice from the international community to give a voice to one SIDS country which are of the most vulnerable states currently impacted by climate change. Through its presidency, Fiji's set up its main goal to reinforce and advance on the objectives identified within the Paris Agreement with regard to the effects of global warming. For more information on the outcomes of the COP23, please click [here](#).

For many destinations, the unique and diverse **biodiversity**, e.g. in national parks or on coral reefs, forms a main tourist attraction. Tourism can contribute directly and positively to the conservation of such precious and sensitive areas and habitats in a variety of ways. However, tourism can also negatively impact on biodiversity and natural habitat if land and natural resources are excessively exploited and if tourism development is not managed responsibly. Therefore, biodiversity conservation and environmental protection are priorities tourism stakeholders must care about. Tourism planning and development must pursue sound environmental management practices and be accompanied by appropriate conservation and environmental protection measures, which should be on-going to protect the natural environment and the tourism asset value of destinations.

Particularly, government intervention and the roles of public institutions in sustainable development of tourism and wildlife and biodiversity conservation are significant. However, in spite of the rich biodiversity and wildlife tourism resources in the Asia and the Pacific region, there have been relatively few discussions and research studies that examine wildlife and biodiversity conservation for sustainable tourism development in the region.

As tourism leaders come together for the 30th Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commissions for Asia and the Pacific and South Asia, the occasion is ideal for them, in their policy-making capacities, to examine the effect of climate change on tourism development, and the link between sustainable tourism development and biodiversity conservation, and how this translates into governance arrangements in their respective destinations.

2. Objectives

In the above context, the objectives of the Seminar are:

- To understand the challenges and opportunities of the impacts of climate change for tourism development, especially in protected and coastal areas in Asia and the Pacific.
- To raise the awareness of the important relationship between biodiversity protection and sustainable tourism development
- To exchange views and experiences on applying sustainability principles and policy instruments for sustainable tourism development related to climate change and biodiversity protection
- To provide recommendations on strengthening governance and management mechanisms to ensure that tourism serves as a positive force, minimizing environmental impact, helping to conserve biodiversity and contributing to the wellbeing of local communities.

3. Methodology

The seminar will begin with an opening ceremony during which there will be welcome speeches and introductory remarks by the Honourable Prime Minister of Fiji, the Attorney General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service & Communications of Fiji, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism of Fiji, the Chairman of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the Secretary-General of UNWTO.

The seminar will then proceed with a high-level dialogue among tourism leaders on how to address the issue of climate change in tourism development in the Asia Pacific region looking at governance mechanisms that can be used in the planning, development and operational phase of tourism development.

This will be followed by a technical session composed of three components:

- An introduction that provides an overview of the activities of UNWTO and other organizations on governance mechanisms for sustainable tourism and wildlife and biodiversity conservation, with a particular focus on initiatives in Asia and the Pacific.
- A Technical Presentation on wildlife tourism in the context of climate change including the presentation of good cases in Asia and the Pacific, followed by an Open Forum on that theme.
- A Technical Presentation on climate change and the management of biodiversity protection in protected areas, followed by an Open Forum on that theme.

In the afternoon, there will be two seminar sessions addressing sustainability in wildlife and biodiversity conservation through policy and regulatory frameworks (session one), and financing sustainable tourism development initiatives tackling climate change and biodiversity loss (session two) where best practice case studies, publications and initiatives on the ground in the region will be examined.

4. The Participants

International participants are primarily from National Tourism Administrations and National Tourist Organizations from Asia and the Pacific, with selected representatives from other organizations dealing with tourism and sustainable development.

National participants will include national and local government officials dealing with tourism and environment, tourism industry members, universities and media.

