

## **UN Tourism's (World Tourism Organization) contribution to the Secretary-General's background note for the preparatory meeting of the 2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14**

### **Theme of the 2025 Conference:**

**Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean**

### **Tourism and the Ocean**

**Status and trends:** *Contributions are sought on the status of progress and trends in the implementation of SDG 14, since the United Nations Ocean Conference held in Lisbon in 2022. Entities are requested also to provide updates on the key milestones achieved of relevance to SDG14 in their respective areas since 2022.*

The tourism sector has a unique transformational potential in ocean economies and can act as a lever for climate action, biodiversity restoration and community inclusion. Tourism accounts for 40% of the ocean economy, supporting businesses of all sizes, providing jobs and even serving as a pillar for a country's economy.<sup>1</sup> The explicit mention of tourism in Target 14.7 of the SDGs recognizes the important role that tourism can play in promoting the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.

The symbiotic relationship between tourism and the ocean places tourism in a unique position to contribute to the achievement of SDG14 if its potential is harnessed properly. One way to do this is through integrating tourism development into the plans of an Integrated Coastal Zone Management. Coastal and maritime tourism can promote the sustainable use of marine resources and balance the economic, social and environmental objectives of coastal and maritime tourism by assessing the capacity of natural and cultural resources, establishing sustainable tourism practices and ensuring that tourism development does not degrade the natural and cultural heritage of the destination.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the pandemic, tourism made up 30% or more of the total exports in 22 SIDS and over 80% in five of them. COVID-19 led to drastic reductions in export revenues, causing significant job losses, particularly affecting SMEs and hindering progress towards the SDGs. By the end of 2023, SIDS achieved a rebound of tourism to 92% of pre-pandemic levels, outpacing the global rate. Recovery varied by region, with the Caribbean leading due to early reopening and high U.S. demand, while Asia-Pacific SIDS faced slower recovery. Tourism

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditctedinf2021d2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditctedinf2021d2_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through Tourism – Toolkit of Indicators for Projects \(TIPs\) \(e-unwto.org\)](https://www.unwto.org/achieving-the-sustainable-development-goals-through-tourism-toolkit-of-indicators-for-projects-tips)

resurgence has been a significant economic driver for SIDS where it's a primary export, contributing to broader economic recovery. The 2024 outlook is positive, with expected growth in tourism despite potential setbacks from high travel costs, geopolitical tensions, and environmental vulnerabilities.

The need to enhance tourism governance in SIDS is of utmost importance for resilience and sustainability. However, as tourism is a productive sector as trade in services, tourism trade and its broad ecosystem needs to shift towards more circular business models. UN Tourism is supporting the creation of policy frameworks that incentivize regenerative tourism, including through the restoration of ecosystems and community inclusion; practices that contribute to strengthening local supply chains by diversifying business models and integrating circularity, including in connection with food and also waste; and innovative finance solutions like nature-based financing and blue carbon initiatives.

#### Key milestones:

- [Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism:](#)
  - It is a voluntary commitment led by UN Tourism (World Tourism Organization) within the framework of the [One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme](#) which was launched at UNFCCC COP26 in November 2021 for the tourism sector to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement.
  - The Glasgow Declaration was in focus at UN Ocean 2022 during the side-event [Tourism Ocean Action – Towards a Circular and Regenerative Blue Economy - Side Event at The UN Ocean Conference 2022](#) and has continued achieving milestones in its implementation, with signatories of the voluntary commitment reaching over 850 by December 2023.
  - The Glasgow Declaration promotes an integrated approach mitigation – adaptation that supports tourism destinations building resilience to climate risk and enables a transition towards regenerative and circular approaches. Measurement, Decarbonization, Regeneration, Collaboration and Finance are the five guiding pathways of the Declaration.
  - In the Glasgow Declaration [Implementation Report 2023](#), the Regenerate pathway, which has a specific focus on supporting nature's ability to draw down carbon – including the ocean - while bringing tourists and local communities closer to nature, was identified as needing further guidance as it potentially offers the greatest opportunity for tourism to play a leading, transformative role (for instance contributing to climate adaptation, ecosystems restoration and regenerative tourism).
  
- [Global Tourism Plastics Initiative:](#)
  - It is a voluntary commitment co-led by UN Tourism and UNEP within the framework of the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme. The initiative is supporting the shift towards a circular economy by addressing marine litter and plastic pollution at the source. It contributes to the readiness of tourism

stakeholders vis à vis the upcoming International Legally Binding Instrument on Plastic Pollution, including the Marine Environment. The initiative promotes the elimination of unnecessary single-use plastics, the transition to reuse models and the integration of reusable, recyclable, or compostable plastic packaging and items.

- [Global Roadmap for Food Waste Reduction in Tourism:](#)
  - o The Roadmap was launched by UN Tourism in collaboration with UNEP within the framework of the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme. It places emphasis on reducing food waste as both a cost-effective and environmentally responsible strategy for tourism stakeholders which has great potential to contribute to more sustainable food systems through the strengthening of local value chains. Both the accommodation and cruise industries are specifically addressed in the roadmap.

**Leveraging interlinkages between SDG14 and other SDGs towards ocean action: challenges and opportunities:** *Contributions are sought on the interlinkages between the 10 targets of SDG 14 and other SDGs in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to address: Challenges to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources (e.g., areas where gaps and challenges exist, where more action is needed); Opportunities for conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, in particular considering interlinkages with other relevant SDGs.*

Five targets within SDG14 are deemed to have a stronger and direct tourism link to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development have been selected to base the potential project indicators.

- 14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.
- 14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans.
- 14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.
- 14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.
- 14.b Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.

For example, Target 14.1, which relates mainly to reducing marine pollution, for instance, through the adoption of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns, is connected to SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production, specifically Target 12.1, which relates to implementation of the 10-Year Sustainable Consumption and Production Framework (the One Planet network of Programmes). Similarly, Target 14.7 on increasing the economic benefits from sustainable use of marine resources connects with local economic development. For more information please access the [Toolkit of Indicators for Projects – Achieving the SDGs through Tourism.](#)

**Mobilizing all actors to accelerating ocean action:** Contributions are sought on ways to promote collaboration, cooperation and partnerships to accelerate implementation of SDG 14. The following issues will be highlighted:

*1. Investing in SDG 14:* This section will focus on ways and means to support the implementation of SDG14. The following cross-cutting issues relevant to support the implementation of SDG 14 will be explored among others: Mobilizing finance for SDG 14; Marine science and technology (including technology development and transfer) and the use of traditional knowledge for ocean health; Capacity-building.

*2. Strengthening Partnerships (including Voluntary Commitments):* This section will focus on key initiatives undertaken in partnership at the global, regional and national levels with a diverse set of stakeholders. Contributions may also highlight voluntary commitments made and their impact as relevant.

*3. Mobilizing All actors*

This section will consider the relevant stakeholders that need to be mobilized to accelerate ocean action, with a focus on the role of women, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities to leave no one behind.

*1. Investing in SDG 14*

- [Net Zero Facility](#): Among UN Tourism’s flagship initiatives is the creation of a Net Zero Fund to accelerate mitigation and adaptation in tourism while engaging the sector in carbon removal. The facility will be structured as a UN Multi-partner Trust Fund and aims to unlock carbon value, incorporating concepts such as blue carbon and circular business models. Grants will be used to de-risk scalable investments, building a blended finance model of Aid for Impact.
- Capacity building: UN Tourism has recently released the [Policy Guidance to Support Climate Action by National Tourism Administrations](#) with the aim to enable tourism policy makers integrate mitigation and adaptation approaches in tourism policies. Upon the invitation of UN Tourism’s Secretary-General, 59 Ministries of Tourism nominated climate action focal points among their staff, in an unprecedented exercise. Additional tools and resources on climate action, including trainings, are collated in the [Glasgow Declaration Repository](#). To support the integration of circular economy principles in tourism operations, a number of resources and tools, including training materials have been developed and compiled in the [Repository of the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative](#) and the [Repository for Sustainable Food Systems in Tourism](#).
- Measurement: The [Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism \(MST\) program](#), led by UN Tourism, has developed the first statistical framework to integrate essential economic, social, and environmental tourism data. By enhancing existing systems like the Tourism Satellite Account and the Environmental Economic Accounting, it offers standardized concepts, definitions, and structures for data comparability and implementation flexibility according to national priorities. Recognized globally, including by the European Parliament and in the Pacific and G20 contexts, MST was unanimously endorsed at the UN Tourism General Assembly in February 2024, highlighting its significance in understanding tourism's sustainability impacts.

## 2. Strengthening Partnerships (including Voluntary Commitments)

- **One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme**: The Programme provides the umbrella for the implementation of voluntary commitments such as the Glasgow Declaration and the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative, where UN Tourism collaborates closely with UNEP. The Programme empowers and mobilizes tourism stakeholders from the public and private sector and civil society to enhance the ocean preservation and restoration through sustainable tourism practices. For additional information on the voluntary commitments, please see the key milestones outlined above in section “Status and Trends”.
- **Nature Positive Tourism Partnership**: The partnership is a new collaborative effort launched by UN Tourism jointly with the World Travel and Tourism Council and the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance at the UN Biodiversity Conference COP15 in December 2022. It has the objective to mobilize tourism public, private stakeholders and civil society to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, supporting the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The partnership will bring together the best practices on nature positive tourism, showcasing positive actions and practical advances made by countries to protect biodiversity and build back nature.

## 3. Mobilizing All actors

- The relationship between tourism and the ocean is deeply intertwined. Tourism depends on healthy coastal and marine ecosystems. Women, youth, indigenous peoples, and local communities play crucial roles in the protection of these fragile ecosystems, as they possess unique knowledge, perspectives, and cultural connections to coastal areas and marine resources. By empowering and involving these groups, tourism initiatives can ensure inclusivity and foster a sense of ownership among local communities, ultimately leading to more sustainable practices and the preservation of ocean resources for future generations. Furthermore, by mobilizing diverse stakeholders and promoting sustainable tourism practices, we can work towards not only conserving but also regenerating our ocean ecosystems, ensuring their resilience and vitality for generations to come.

**Possible themes for the Ocean Action Panels:** Recommendations will be made for the themes of the ten Ocean Action panels in this section, based on the input received.

UN Tourism proposes that one of the panels during the Ocean Conference could focus on tourism, with the tentative title “Tourism Ocean Action: towards a low carbon, nature positive and socially inclusive coastal and marine tourism.”