



# Economic, Social, and Environmental Sustainability In Tourism

HLPF 2023 Official side event (in person)

14 July 2023 | 13:15 - 14:30

Conference Room 3, United Nations Headquarters, New York

*Background document*

## Background

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The Ministry of Tourism and Sport of the Republic of Croatia in collaboration with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), has organized this side event with the support of the Ministry of Tourism of India, Chair of the G20 Tourism Working Group, to showcase how partnerships across multilateral, public, private, and academic sectors can actively contribute to the fulfillment of tourism's potential in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the pivotal role of tourism in global economies and societies, making it a critical sector for designing forward-looking initiatives at international, national, and corporate levels, while mobilizing capacity to transform the commitment to the SDGs into concrete actions.

## Objective

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The side event aims to highlight the importance of aligning the tourism sector with the principles of sustainable development. By embracing a sustainable, low-carbon, and socially inclusive path, the sector can contribute to the well-being of people, the planet, and prosperity. This approach embodies the concept of sustainable tourism, which integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development and aims to minimize negative impacts while maximizing positive ones. To achieve a balanced and sustainable recovery, it is crucial for governments to implement policies and measures that contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Parting from the top-level policy vision conveyed by the India's G20 Presidency and the UNWTO Executive Council, there is global consensus building effort underway known as Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST) that responds to the need for guidance to produce data on tourism's sustainability to empower policy makers and the private sector with more robust data to shape innovative policies, transform business models and promote better tourism governance.

An example of moving beyond GDP metric, the Statistical Framework for MST covering economic, social and environmental data on tourism will be presented to the next session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2024 for its endorsement. It is within this context that UNWTO, in partnership with the University of Oxford and with the sponsorship of easyJet Holidays, embarked on the development of a harmonized Environmental Social Governance (ESG) Framework for Tourism Businesses to not only better visualize the private sector's contribution but also help ensure alignment of action on the ground with broader policy ambitions like the SDGs.

Speakers in the high-level roundtable will share their views, expertise and leadership in these innovative developments. Tourism is nested within our economic, social and environmental systems - and it needs to be measured as such.

## Key Focus Areas

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**Strengthening Resilience:** The discussion will emphasize the need to enhance the resilience of the tourism sector in the face of pandemics and other challenges, as highlighted during COVID-19. It will explore strategies to promote sustainable recovery and innovative ideas to build resilience in the tourism sector.

**Inclusive Sustainability:** The event will underscore the importance of inclusion by advocating for the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on women and youth. By fostering their participation, we can enhance the role of tourism in societies and global sustainability processes.

**Partnerships and Collaboration:** The event will showcase the power of partnerships across multilateral, public, private, and academic sectors. By highlighting successful collaborations, it aims to demonstrate how these partnerships contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by realizing the full potential of tourism as a force for positive change.

**Data and Measurement:** Speakers will discuss the significance of credible, harmonized and comparable data in tracking tourism actions on the ground and ensuring their alignment with broader policy ambitions and how they are relevant to measure SDG progress. By measuring tourism's economic, social, and environmental impacts, we can better integrate tourism across our policy instruments and more effectively and efficiently realize progress towards sustainable development.

## Expected Outcomes

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The side event aims to foster a collective understanding of the importance of sustainable tourism and its potential for promoting the SDGs. Key outcomes include:

- Inspire common action between the public and private sector for the tourism sector to achieve real sustainability by focusing on the social, environmental and governance aspects in tourism;
- Enhance awareness of the need for resilient tourism policies and practices and sustainable recovery strategies; and
- Guide real transformation of tourism and empowering the sector to play its part in realizing the SDGs through the presentation of the following initiatives:
  - Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a Vehicle for Achieving the SDGs developed under India's G20 Presidency.
  - Statistical Framework for MST which is forging a global consensus for harmonized data on the economic, social and environmental performance of tourism at international, national and destination levels
  - Launch of an international effort towards an ESG Framework for Tourism Businesses focused on bringing the benefits of harmonization to private sector data
  - UNWTO – JICA publication– Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through tourism – Toolkit of Indicators for Projects (TIPs)

## Conclusion

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It is our shared responsibility to drive positive change in the tourism sector and build a more equitable and sustainable future. It is of great importance for Governments to implement actionable data and policies to incentivize transformation for achieving the SDGs and realizing the 2030 Agenda.

## Interesting links

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- The Achieving the SDGs through Tourism – Toolkit of Indicators for Projects (TIPs) Publication  
<https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/10.18111/9789284424344>
- Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a Vehicle for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals  
<https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/10.18111/9789284424443>
- Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST)  
<https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/measuring-sustainability-tourism>
- ESG Framework for tourism businesses  
<https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/environmental-social-governance-tourism>
- Tourism Statistics  
<https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics>