
THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF THE TOURISM IN ACHIEVING THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Aneta Stojanovska-Stefanova

University Goce Delcev-Stip, Republic of North Macedonia, aneta.stojanovska@ugd.edu.mk

Nikola V. Dimitrov

University Goce Delcev-Stip, Republic of North Macedonia, nikola.dimitrov@ugd.edu.mk

Marija Magdinceva-Sopova

University Goce Delcev-Stip, Republic of North Macedonia, marija.magdinceva@ugd.edu.mk

Abstract: As the United Nations General Assembly affirmed when announcing the adoption of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, tourism can contribute to all the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – and each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Not only does the sector spearhead growth, it also improves the quality of people's lives. It can bolster environmental protection, champion diverse cultural heritage, and strengthen peace in the world.

In this spirit, World Tourism Day 2017 presents a unique opportunity to raise awareness on the contribution of sustainable tourism for development among public and private sector decision-makers and the international community, while mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change. Accounting for 7% of worldwide exports, one in eleven jobs and 10% of the world's GDP, the tourism sector if well managed can foster inclusive economic growth, social inclusiveness and the protection of cultural and natural assets. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is plan of action for the people, planet and prosperity.

In accordance with paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, Member States have decided that the High Level Political Forum shall carry out regular voluntary reviews of the 2030 Agenda which will include developed and developing countries as well as relevant UN entities and other stakeholders. The reviews were state-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants, and provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. Since the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 - known as the Earth Summit, it was recognized that achieving sustainable development would require the active participation of all sectors of society and all types of people. Agenda 21, adopted at the Earth Summit, drew upon this sentiment and formalized nine sectors of society as the main channels through which broad participation would be facilitated in UN activities related to sustainable development.

It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom, in the same time recognising that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

All countries and all stakeholders, has committed that acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan.

Keywords: development, protection, awareness, goals, future

1.INTRODUCTION

The historic agreement among world's leaders at the United Nations in 2015 on a universal 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development committed all countries to pursue a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would lead to a better future for all. The bold agenda sets out a global framework to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and fix climate changes until 2030.

As the 17 SDGs and the corresponding 169 SDG targets offer the world a new direction, tourism can and must play a significant role in delivering sustainable solutions for the people, planet, prosperity and peace.

Tourism as an economic powerhouse is the third highest world category in export earnings in 2015, representing 10% of world GDP, 30% of services exports and 1 out of every 10 jobs in the world. Tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly to all of the goals. In particular, it has been included as targets in Goals 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, respectively.

On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with it the Sustainable Development Goals, a framework comprising 17 goals and 169 targets, through which States, civil society, and private sector can guide and measure their contributions to sustainable development towards 2030.

The new development agenda is the most ambitious to date and the 17 goals are a universal call to action to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The goals are interconnected- often the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another. The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the appropriate and right choices to improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations.

2. THE 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As the United Nations General Assembly affirmed when announcing the adoption of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, tourism can contribute to all the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – and each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Not only does the sector spearhead growth, it also improves the quality of people’s lives. It can bolster environmental protection, champion diverse cultural heritage, and strengthen peace in the world.



Picture: Round Chart of Tourism Goals⁴⁹

SDGs No Poverty, is the first goal on the Round Chart picture, and it is related to tourism as well-positioned to foster economic growth and development at all levels, that can provide income through job creation as one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world, sustainable tourism development, and its impact at community level, can be linked with national poverty reduction goals, those related to promoting entrepreneurship and small businesses, and empowering less favored groups, particularly youth and women.

SDGs Zero Hunger goal is trying to underline that Tourism can spur sustainable agriculture by promoting the production and supplies to hotels, and sales of local products to tourists. Agro-tourism can generate additional income while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.

Tax income generated from tourism can be reinvested in health care and services, improving maternal health, reduce child mortality and preventing diseases. Visitors fees collected in protected areas can as well contribute to health services therefore this is *SDGs 3rd goal: Good health and well being*.

SDGs Quality Education, highlighted that the tourism has the potential to promote inclusiveness. A skilful workforce is crucial for tourism to prosper. The tourism sector provides opportunities for direct and indirect jobs for youth, women, and those with special needs, who should benefit through educational means.

SDGs Gender Equality goal underlines that the tourism can empower women, particularly through the provision of direct jobs and income-generation from SMEs in tourism and hospitality related enterprises. Tourism can be a tool for women to become fully engaged and lead in every aspect of society.

Tourism investment requirement for providing utilities can play a critical role in achieving water access and security, as well as hygiene and sanitation for all. The efficient use of water in tourism, pollution control and

⁴⁹ Source: Tourism for SDGs, link: <http://tourism4sdgs.org/tourism-for-sdgs/tourism-and-sdgs/>, last accessed 8 June 2019

technology efficiency can be key to safeguarding our most precious resource, so this is **SDG 6 – Clean Water And Sanitation**.

SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy goal aware that tourism as a sector, which is energy intensive, can accelerate the shift towards increased renewable energy shares in the global energy mix. By promoting investments in clean energy sources, tourism can help to reduce green house gases, mitigate climate change and contribute to access of energy for all.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, underlines that tourism as service trade is one of the top four export earners globally, currently providing one in ten jobs worldwide. Decent work opportunities in tourism, particularly for youth and women, and policies that favour better diversification through tourism value chains can enhance tourism positive socio-economic impacts.

SDG 9 – Industry Innovation and Infrastructure aims that tourism development relies on good public and private infrastructure. The sector can influence public policy for infrastructure upgrade and retrofit, making them more sustainable, innovative and resource-efficient and moving towards low carbon growth, thus attracting tourists and other sources of foreign investment.

Tourism can be a powerful tool for reducing inequalities if it engages local populations and all key stakeholders in its development.

Tourism can contribute to urban renewal and rural development by giving people the opportunity to prosper in their place of origin. Tourism serves as an effective mean for economic integration and diversification therefore this is **SDG 10th goal – Reduced Inequalities**.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities aims that tourism can advance urban infrastructure and accessibility, promote regeneration and preserve cultural and natural heritage, assets on which tourism depends. Investment in green infrastructure (more efficient transport, reduced air pollution) should result in smarter and greener cities for, not only residents but also tourists.

According to the **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production**, the tourism sector needs to adopt sustainable consumption and production (SCP) models, accelerating the shift towards sustainability. Tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for tourism including for energy, water, waste, biodiversity and job creation will result in enhanced economic, social and environmental outcomes.

According to the **SDG 13 – Climate Action**, the tourism contributes to and is affected by climate change. Tourism stakeholders should play a leading role in the global response to climate change. By reducing its carbon footprint, in the transport and accommodation sector, tourism can benefit from low carbon growth and help tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

SDG 14 – Life Below Water, coastal and maritime tourism rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be a part of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in order to help conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote a blue economy, contributing to the sustainable use of marine resources.

According to the **SDG 15 – Life On Land**, rich biodiversity and natural heritage are often the main reasons why tourists visit a destination. Tourism can play a major role if sustainably managed in fragile zones, not only in conserving and preserving biodiversity, but also in generating revenue as an alternative livelihood to local communities.

According to the **SDG 16 – Peace Justice and Strong Institutions**, as tourism revolves around billions of encounters between people of diverse cultural backgrounds, the sector can foster multicultural and inter-faith tolerance and understanding, laying the foundation for more peaceful societies. Tourism, which benefits and engages local communities, can also consolidate peace in post-conflict societies.

Due to its cross-sectoral nature, tourism has the ability to strengthen private/public partnerships and engage multiple stakeholders – international, national, regional and local – to work together to achieve the SDGs and other common goals. Public policy and innovative financing are at the core for achieving the 2030 Agenda⁵⁰, therefore this is the **SDG number 17 – Partnerships For The Goals**.

We may conclude that Tourism for Sustainable Development Goals offers the opportunity for a wide range of scholars and tourism stakeholders to discuss and debate both (i) challenges to tourism contributing to the SDGs, and (ii) ways in which tourism can deliver on its potential to be more inclusive, equitable and sustainable, in line with the values embedded in the Global Goals.

Tourism's role in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be significantly strengthened when sustainable development becomes a shared responsibility and moves to the core of decision-making within the

⁵⁰ Tourism for SDGs, link: <http://tourism4sdgs.org/tourism-for-sdgs/what-are-the-sdgs/>, accessed 6 June 2019

tourism sector. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations System are committed to inspiring leadership and facilitating collaboration among all stakeholders to realize the SDGs and targets that are spelled out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN member states' designation of 2017 as the International Year for Sustainable Tourism for Development sets the ideal stage for the sector to embark on a common journey towards 2030; a journey guided by the SDGs following the commitment of all UNWTO member states at the 22nd UNWTO General Assembly to the 'Chengdu Declaration on Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals'. A joint effort by UNWTO, UNDP and other partners, Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030 aims to build knowledge, and empower and inspire tourism stakeholders to take necessary action to accelerate the shift towards a more sustainable tourism sector by aligning policies, business operations and investments with the SDGs⁵¹.

In accordance with paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, Member States have decided that the HLPF shall carry out regular voluntary reviews of the 2030 Agenda which will include developed and developing countries as well as relevant UN entities and other stakeholders. The reviews were state-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants, and provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. Since the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 - known as the Earth Summit, it was recognized that achieving sustainable development would require the active participation of all sectors of society and all types of people. Agenda 21, adopted at the Earth Summit, drew upon this sentiment and formalized nine sectors of society as the main channels through which broad participation would be facilitated in UN activities related to sustainable development. These are officially called "Major Groups" and include the following sectors:

- Women;
- Children and Youth;
- Indigenous Peoples;
- Non-Governmental Organizations;
- Local Authorities;
- Workers and Trade Unions;
- Business and Industry;
- Scientific and Technological Community;
- Farmers;

Two decades after the Earth Summit, the importance of effectively engaging these nine sectors of society was reaffirmed by the "Rio+20" Conference. Its outcome document "The Future We Want" highlights the role that Major Groups can play in pursuing sustainable societies for future generations. In addition, governments invited other stakeholders, including local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities, to participate in UN processes related to sustainable development, which can be done through close collaboration with the Major Groups.

Major Groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) continue to demonstrate a high level of engagement with intergovernmental processes at the UN. The coordination of their input to intergovernmental processes on sustainable development has been led by UNDESA/Division for Sustainable Development (DSD). Member States ultimately decide upon the modalities of participation of MGoS. Thus, the engagement and participation of MGoS in intergovernmental processes related to sustainable development varies depending on the particular sustainable development topic under discussion⁵².

In 2017, 43 countries have volunteered to present their national voluntary reviews to the high-level political forum (HLPF). As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages member states to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven" (paragraph 79). These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the high-level political forum, meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC. As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led,

⁵¹ UNDP, link:

https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Sustainable%20Development/UNWTO_UNDP_Tourism%20and%20the%20SDGs.pdf, accessed 6 June 2019

⁵² Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/mgos>, last accessed November 8, 2017

undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The voluntary national reviews countries are expected to submit comprehensive written reports that will be made available in the [VNR database](#). In addition, each VNR country will also provide main messages summarizing their key findings. These main messages are also posted in the [VNR database](#)⁵³.

As previously noted, during the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly 154 heads of state or government adopted the bold and ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to, *inter alia* - end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure *prosperity for all*.

Based on this universal, integrated and transformative vision, UNWTO is placing its efforts and tireless work in contributing with its technical assistance and capacity-building to the achievement of these global goals. UNWTO is working with governments, public and private partners, development banks, international and regional finance institutions, the UN agencies and international organizations to help achieve the SDGs, placing an emphasis on Goals 8,12 and 14, in which tourism is featured.

UNWTO developed the ‘Tourism for SDGs platform’⁵⁴ with the support of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland – aimed at policy makers, international organizations, academia, donors, companies and all tourism stakeholders and encourages them to engage in SDG implementation strategies. The platform’s three main features, Learn, Share and Act, are also calls for action, conversation and collaboration towards a sustainable tourism sector.

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Tourism is one of the driving forces of global economic growth, and currently accounts for 1 in 11 jobs worldwide. By giving access to decent work opportunities in the tourism sector, society- particularly youth and women- can benefit from enhanced skills and professional development. The sector's contribution to job creation is recognized in target 8.9 *"By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products"*.

Ensure sustainable Consumption and Production patterns. A tourism sector that adopts sustainable consumption and production (SCP) practices can play a significant role in accelerating the global shift towards sustainability. To do so, as set in Target 12.b of Goal 12, it is imperative to *"Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products"*. The Sustainable Tourism Programme (STP) of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) aims at developing such SCP practices, including resource efficient initiatives that result in enhanced economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Coastal and maritime tourism, tourism's biggest segments, particularly for Small Island Developing States' (SIDS), rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be a part of integrated Coastal Zone Management in order to help conserve and preserve fragile ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote the blue economy, in line with target 14.7: *"by 2030 increase the economic benefits of SIDS and LCDs from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism"*⁵⁵.

According to the paragraph 130 from the document “The Future We Want” (A/RES/66/288), the United Nations emphasize that well-designed and managed tourism can make a significant contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development, has close linkages to other sectors, and can create decent jobs and generate trade opportunities. United Nations recognize the need to support sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacitybuilding that promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, flora, biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural diversity, and improve the welfare and livelihoods of local communities by supporting their local economies and the human and natural environment as a whole. Therefore, UN call for

⁵³ More details about countries messages you can read at following link:

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17035Compilation_of_Main_Messages_from_2017_VNRs.pdf, last accessed November 8, 2017

⁵⁴ More at: www.tourism4sdgs.org

⁵⁵ Institutional Relations and Resource Mobilization, link: <https://icr.unwto.org/content/tourism-and-sdgs>, last accessed: 8 June 2019

enhanced support for sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building in developing countries in order to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

3. CONCLUSION

The year 2015 has been a milestone for global development as governments have adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The bold agenda sets out a global framework to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and fix climate change until 2030. Building on the historic Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the ambitious set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets is people-centred, transformative, universal and integrated.

Tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the goals. In particular, it has been included as targets in Goals 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, respectively. Sustainable tourism is firmly positioned in the 2030 Agenda. Achieving this agenda, however, requires a clear implementation framework, adequate financing and investment in technology, infrastructure and human resources.

Roughly half the world's population still lives on the equivalent of about U.S. \$2 a day with global unemployment rates of 5.7% and having a job doesn't guarantee the ability to escape from poverty in many places. This slow and uneven progress requires us to rethink and retool our economic and social policies aimed at eradicating poverty. A continued lack of decent work opportunities, insufficient investments and under-consumption lead to an erosion of the basic social contract underlying democratic societies: that all must share in progress. Even though the average annual growth rate of real GDP per capita worldwide is increasing year on year, there are still many countries in the developing world that are decelerating in their growth rates and moving farther from the 7% growth rate target set for 2030. As labor productivity decreases and unemployment rates rise, standards of living begin to decline due to lower wages. Sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs that stimulate the economy while not harming the environment. Job opportunities and decent working conditions are also required for the whole working age population. There needs to be increased access to financial services to manage incomes, accumulate assets and make productive investments. Increased commitments to trade, banking and agriculture infrastructure will also help increase productivity and reduce unemployment levels in the world's most impoverished regions.

In Fine, we may conclude that successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level. According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, an urgent action is needed to mobilize, redirect and unlock the transformative power of trillions of dollars of private resources to deliver on sustainable development objectives. Long-term investments, including foreign direct investment, are needed in critical sectors, especially in developing countries. These include sustainable energy, infrastructure and transport, as well as information and communications technologies. The public sector will need to set a clear direction. Review and monitoring frameworks, regulations and incentive structures that enable such investments must be retooled to attract investments and reinforce sustainable development. National oversight mechanisms such as supreme audit institutions and oversight functions by legislatures should be strengthened.

REFERENCES

- Stojanovska-Stefanova, A., & Atanasoski, D., (2018) "UN Goal: Sustainable Tourism as a Key Contributor for Sustainable Development in Developing Countries", Yearbook - Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics, [S.l.], v. 3, n. 2, p. 152-161, Feb. 2018. Available at: <http://js.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/YFNTS/article/view/2195>
 Accor: <http://www.accor.com/en/sustainable-development.html>
 CEOP: <http://www.ceop.police.uk/International-Child-Protection-Network/>
 Ethics and Social Dimensions of Tourism Programme World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ethics@unwto.org
 International Tourism Partnership (Youth Career Initiative): <http://www.tourismpartnership.org/what-we-do/products-programmes/youth-career-initiative>; <http://www.youthcareerinitiative.org>
 Tourism for SDGs, link: www.tourism4sdgs.org
 Tri-national campaign Austria, Germany, Switzerland: http://www.ecpat.de/uploads/media/Flyer_Kleine_Seelen.pdf
 United Nations: www.un.org
 UNWTO Elibrary for more titles in electronic format: www.e-unwto.org
 UNWTO World Tourism Network on Child Protection: <http://ethics.unwto.org/content/world-tourism-network-child-protection>