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Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization on the promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection, submitted in accordance with Assembly resolution [67/223](#).

* [A/69/150](#).



Report of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization on the promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [67/223](#) on the promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection. Sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. It applies to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism subsectors.

The present report provides an update since the issuance of the previous report on the subject ([A/67/228](#)), with a view to assisting in the promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, as an element of sustainable livelihoods that fight poverty and promote environment protection.

I. Introduction

1. In General Assembly resolution [67/223](#), the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, in collaboration with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and other relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, a report on the implementation of the resolution, including recommendations on ways and means to promote ecotourism as a tool for fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development. As the specialized agency of the United Nations system vested with a central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, UNWTO was, in turn, requested to take the lead in preparing the present report.

2. Accordingly, early in 2014 UNWTO conducted a follow-up survey among United Nations Member States in order to monitor the implementation of resolution [67/223](#). For many Member States, national tourism strategies are still current,¹ with most ending in 2020. Some 29 UNWTO member States and territories provided an update since 2012 on issues in the follow-up survey on the implementation of the resolution (see annex for the list of respondents). Among them, 21 countries responded that they had strengthened their national guidelines or frameworks on sustainable tourism since 2012. UNWTO also sought and used input from relevant specialized agencies, United Nations bodies and other international organizations, in addition to reviewing existing relevant initiatives and projects. The present report is based on the responses received and information acquired through this process and on relevant publications and documents of UNWTO, United Nations agencies and international institutions.

II. United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, green economy and developments since the adoption of resolution [67/223](#)

3. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, Member States acknowledged that tourism was a sector capable of making significant contributions to the three dimensions of sustainable development, owing particularly to its highly interactive linkages with other sectors. In the outcome document of the Conference, entitled “The future we want”, it was stated that there was a need to support sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building that promoted environmental awareness, conserved and protected the environment, respected wildlife, flora, biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural diversity and improved the welfare and livelihoods of local communities (para. 130). In the same document, the promotion of investment in sustainable tourism, including ecotourism and cultural tourism, which might include creating small and medium-sized enterprises and facilitating access to finance, including through microcredit initiatives for the poor, indigenous peoples and local communities in areas with high ecotourism potential, was encouraged (para. 131). At the Conference, sustainable tourism development was also recognized as one of the 10 sectors to drive change towards a green economy. The 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, an operational

¹ Since the issuance of the previous report of the Secretary-General of UNWTO on the subject ([A/67/228](#)).

outcome of the Conference, reinforces sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, as a significant driver for sociocultural and economic change. With 1,087 million international tourist arrivals in 2013, compared with 25 million in 1950, there is an enormous opportunity to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production in the tourism sector and beyond.

4. At the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, UNWTO presented its report on sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America (A/68/278), which summarized developments relating to the implementation of resolution 66/196. That report substantiated the importance of sustainable tourism in alleviating poverty and contributing to the socioeconomic and environmental dimensions of global destinations. In the report, proper consideration of the issues of sustainable tourism was encouraged in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

5. Tourism, including ecotourism, is implemented differently around the world. It is a cross-cutting sector, and its growth, combined with increased diversification, makes it a constructive agent for development. As the tourism sector depends on wider assets and infrastructure, such as natural and social assets, it is imperative that tourism be well integrated into planning policies and management guidelines. In order to contribute to sustainable development, it must also be economically viable, environmentally sensitive and culturally appropriate in order to minimize negative impacts.

6. Tourism sector leaders expressed their commitment to recognizing resolution 67/223 at the seventh annual Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference, held in Nairobi in September 2013 on the theme “How tourism can help alleviate poverty and achieve sustainable development”, at which they agreed to realize this recognition by disseminating ideas, opportunities and solutions for the tourism sector in order to assist in strengthening the environmental, economic and social benefits of tourism. The eighth such conference, held in Bonito, Brazil, in April 2014 on the theme “Building ecotourism around the world”, focused on strengthening the tourism sector’s commitment to the resolution by creating a platform for shared best practices.

7. In June 2013, Saint Lucia hosted the first ever Caribbean Green Economy Conference on the theme “Green economy as a vehicle for sustainable development and poverty eradication in the Caribbean”. At the Conference, tourism and agriculture were identified as key drivers for economic growth and sustainability owing to their numerous forward and backward linkages to other economic sectors.

8. Governments, the tourism sector, destinations and other stakeholders have addressed challenges to sustainable development, including those related to tourism, through national, regional and international policies. Input received from Member States shows that ecotourism is being increasingly integrated into national frameworks for sustainable tourism, which is consistent with paragraphs 130 and 131 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which concern sustainable tourism. Meanwhile, UNWTO continues to actively promote the integration of sustainable tourism in both policy-driven and action-oriented initiatives for all tourism stakeholders.

III. International initiatives relevant to ecotourism

9. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, as adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/288, provided, for the first time, a global framework of action to enhance international cooperation to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production. Sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, was recognized as a key vehicle for sustainable development, and a concept note on a sustainable tourism programme based on the 10-year framework, one of five initial programmes, is being drafted through an extensive global multi-stakeholder consultation process. The programme aims to take advantage of tourism's potential to contribute to sustainable development by accelerating sustainable consumption and production patterns while reducing social and environmental impacts over the next 10 years by building on, scaling up and replicating good sustainable tourism practices, guidelines, instruments, models and case studies. The tourism programme is expected to be launched in late 2014 by the future leaders programme.

10. In 2012, at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, it was emphasized that tourism was essential as a livelihood option, particularly for indigenous and local communities, which are stewards of rich and biodiverse areas. The fifth national reports of various Member States on the Convention highlighted that well-integrated tourism development contributed to biodiversity conservation and the promotion of environmental protection. A majority of national reports, particularly from the least developed countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Haiti, Mozambique and Nepal, acknowledged that tourism, especially ecotourism and nature-based tourism, was a promising sector for biodiversity conservation; thus, it was being actively integrated into conservation and tourism development master plans. In addition, countries are addressing the Aichi Biodiversity Targets² for the increased protection of biodiversity by expanding protected area networks and improving the effectiveness of management of protected areas. For example, in June 2013 Sehlabathebe National Park in Lesotho was approved as an extension of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg National Park, a transboundary park in South Africa and Lesotho, named the Maloti-Drakensberg Park, a World Heritage Site. The Maloti Drakensberg Route is a joint ecotourism initiative that includes over 13,000 km² of mountain scenery, including unique biodiversity, more than 22,000 San rock paintings and local cultures.³

11. The Steering Committee on Tourism for Development, established in 2010 as an initiative of UNWTO and currently comprising eight other United Nations entities,⁴ brings coherence to development efforts for a coordinated and impactful

² At the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010, the parties, recognizing the failure to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target, agreed to a comprehensive new Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which includes a set of 20 targets for 2020, known as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

³ "Maloti Drakensberg Route: byways to Southern Africa's magnificent mountain splendour". Available from www.malotidrakensbergroute.com.

⁴ The International Labour Organization, the International Trade Centre, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the World Trade Organization. For more information, see <http://icr.unwto.org/sctd>.

approach to their respective tourism-related work, including in the area of ecotourism. This joint approach builds on the strengths and expertise of each participating member. In October 2013, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat hosted an expert group meeting on the theme “Sustainable tourism: ecotourism, poverty reduction and environmental protection”,⁵ in which a number of participating members of the Steering Committee were represented. Among the actions taken at the meeting, the participants took stock of developments in the promotion and management of ecotourism and its contribution to sustainable development.

12. In 2013, UNWTO published the *Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook* in response to a request from the European Union Directorate General for Development and Cooperation — EuropeAid, which understood the significance of development opportunities associated with the sustainable development of tourism. The Guidebook demonstrates how the tourism sector can be a vehicle to foster economic and social growth through the achievement of development imperatives while minimizing negative cultural, environmental and social impacts. In particular, the Guidebook highlights the complexity of tourism in its linkages with the economic and social sectors, illustrating its vast potential to build sustainable livelihoods, thus placing tourism high in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and in the build-up to the sustainable development goals beyond 2015.

13. The theme of World Migratory Bird Day for 2014, “Destination flyways: migratory birds and tourism”, highlighted the links between migratory bird conservation, local community development and wildlife watching tourism around the world. Led by UNWTO together with partners,⁶ the preliminary phase of the Destination Flyways project has resulted in a set of recommendations for developing sustainable tourism and diversification along flyways in eight countries, to be implemented during a potential main phase that will act as a vehicle for both environmental protection and socioeconomic activities by channelling tourism revenues back into the conservation of the sites. The initiative demonstrates the overall global commitment to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and supports Aichi Target 11, on protected areas, and Aichi Target 14, on safeguarding and restoring ecosystems, with a focus on ensuring ecosystem services crucial to livelihoods.

14. The Global Observatory of Sustainable Tourism, an initiative launched by UNWTO in 2004 in response to the growing demand from tourism organizations and stakeholders for a more systematic application of monitoring, data collection and detection of early warning signals to support evidence-based decision-making while applying the UNWTO methodology for sustainable tourism indicators, has expanded globally. In 2012, two new observatories were opened in China, for a total of five observatories currently operating in the country, while in 2013 the first such

⁵ See <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/resources.html>.

⁶ Partners include the secretariats of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention and the World Heritage Convention, the UNESCO Programme on Man and the Biosphere, the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The preliminary phase of the Destination Flyways project is ongoing with support from the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety of Germany.

observatory in Europe was inaugurated on the Aegean islands of Greece with the objective of examining the environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism in the archipelago. The first Global Observatory member network in the Americas will be established in La Ceiba, Honduras, and will focus initially on data collection in the region and the Bay Islands. At the first UNWTO Conference on the Global Observatory of Sustainable Tourism, held in Madrid in 2013, it was recognized that, if efficiently planned and managed, tourism had the potential to contribute to environmental protection and poverty reduction by capitalizing on biodiversity assets. It was also recognized that tourism could strengthen the political force for conservation by actively contributing through the stimulation of funding.

15. The year 2013 was designated as the International Year of Water Cooperation in recognition of the need for cooperation in order to ensure the sustainable management of this shared and scarce resource. In support of the initiative, World Tourism Day 2013, on the theme “Tourism and water: protecting our common future”, stressed tourism’s responsibility and required commitment to preserve the world’s water resources. This is of particular importance, as many developing countries use their marine, coastal and riverine resources for the development of ecotourism. Promoting sustainable models of marine and coastal ecotourism is critical not only for natural resource managers but also for the global tourism sector and local communities that depend on marine resources for their livelihoods. World Tourism Day 2013 provided an opportunity to increase awareness of tourism’s role in protecting water as a tourism resource and an asset while allowing UNWTO member States to support World Tourism Day through local activities. At the Tourism and Water Ecotourism Conference, held in Tehran in 2013, the focus was on ecotourism adapted to different water environments, such as in deep water and hydrotherapy, and the role of local communities in protecting water resources was discussed. It was recognized that tourism could contribute to water preservation through the sustainable development and effective management of water resources in tourism destinations.

16. Since UNWTO launched the Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty initiative at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, it has undertaken numerous activities to realize the initiative, including 25 regional and national training seminars on tourism and poverty reduction in order to build capacities among public officials, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and communities in developing countries. Continuous research by UNWTO has led to the publication of five reports, providing evidence of the impact of tourism in reducing poverty levels, as well as recommendations on how to maximize those impacts. The recommendations focus on the seven mechanisms of the initiative developed by UNWTO, which describe the different ways in which the poor can benefit directly or indirectly from tourism, as follows:

- (a) Employment of the poor in tourism enterprises;
- (b) Supply of goods and services to tourism enterprises by the poor or by enterprises employing the poor;
- (c) Direct sales of goods and services to visitors by the poor (informal economy);

(d) Establishment and running of tourism enterprises by the poor (e.g. microenterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises or community-based enterprises (formal economy));

(e) Tax or levy on tourism income or profits, with proceeds benefiting the poor;

(f) Voluntary giving/support by tourism enterprises and tourists;

(g) Investment in infrastructure stimulated by tourism also benefiting the poor in the locality, directly or through support to other sectors.

17. More than 100 projects under the Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty initiative have already been approved for implementation, benefiting more than 40 developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and the Balkans. Such projects focus on a wide range of activities at the local, national and regional levels and include the following: market access for rural tourism small and medium-sized enterprises, in various Central American countries (2009-2013); ecotourism development in Kribi, in Cameroon (2011-2013); and development of birdwatching tourism in the regional parks in Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger (2011-2013).

A. Ecotourism and indigenous peoples

18. Fostering the responsible use of living heritage for tourism purposes can provide new employment opportunities and help to alleviate poverty while nurturing a sense of pride among community members. The UNWTO study entitled *Tourism and Intangible Cultural Heritage*⁷ provides comprehensive baseline research on the links between tourism and intangible cultural heritage, recognizing that the integration of intangible cultural heritage into sustainable tourism development programmes is uniquely suited to assist communities in helping to alleviate poverty and creating sustainable livelihoods while respecting the local heritage and environments.

19. The winner of the Community Award of the World Travel and Tourism Council's Tourism for Tomorrow 2014 Awards, Arviat Community Ecotourism in Canada, developed a responsible tourism, community-based project after a successful land claim by its Inuit people. The organization has created 35 full-time positions, and the project generates more than Can\$150,000 each year, supporting local economic development while preserving Inuit culture. The programme has built a tourism sector in Arviat through ecotourism, generating low-volume, high-yield tourism and direct economic benefits to the community through 100 per cent of tourist expenditure in the community.

B. International initiatives relevant to sustainable tourism and ecotourism

20. The Enhanced Integrated Framework for Least Developed Countries welcomed UNWTO as a new observer in December 2013, recognizing the growing importance

⁷ UNWTO, *Tourism and Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Madrid, 2012). The report contains examples of good practices from tourism authorities, representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organizations, as well as academic, technical, research and community development experts in the field of intangible cultural heritage and tourism.

of tourism as a key service in the least developed countries. The Framework is a multi-agency, multi-donor Aid for Trade partnership in action for the least developed countries. It assists and supports those countries in becoming more active players in the global trading system by addressing supply-side constraints to trade. The least developed countries are increasingly developing tourism-related projects under the Framework: for example, the Government of Sierra Leone was supported in the development of five ecotourism sites and has received further support from the Enhanced Integrated Framework Trust Fund to implement the tier 2 project on sustainable tourism development and promotion to develop a national sustainable and responsible ecotourism policy and a five-year action plan. In 2014, the Framework launched the Solomon Islands tier 2 project on tourism, which will systematically intervene in the areas of policy/legislation relating to the tourism sector, promote the Solomon Islands as a distinct destination for visitors and strengthen the linkages of the tourism sector with auxiliary sectors in order to diversify livelihood opportunities.

21. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council is an international body that fosters increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the promotion and adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles. UNWTO is one of the founders of the Council and a permanent member of the Board of Directors, and provides support through an office based in the UNWTO premises in Madrid. In November 2013, the Council launched its criteria for destinations, which offer improved decision-making frameworks to destinations, providing an increased ability to evaluate progress in the sustainable development of tourism. In 2014, the Council strengthened its commitment to assisting destinations in benefiting from the destination criteria by launching the Destination Partner Programme, which gives destination managers options to improve their overall business practices by focusing on training, assessments or global networking.

22. The Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Programme, which is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), continues to support actions that have sustainable tourism components. Under the Small Grants Programme, since 2012 more than 300 projects that address biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters and tourism training have been supported. The Small Grants Programme supports communities' actions by empowering communities to participate in their own development, particularly in initiatives that conserve and restore natural resources. For example, support is being provided to one community-based ecotourism project to improve local livelihoods with the introduction of effective water management, working towards this aim while building resilience to climate extremes.

23. The project of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on rural employment and poverty reduction has been implemented following the publication of its *Toolkit on Poverty Reduction through Tourism*.⁸ The Toolkit outlines approaches for relevant stakeholders in the hotel, catering and tourism sector that are interested and involved in poverty reduction through tourism. It also outlines ILO involvement in promoting decent work, which cuts across the Millennium Development Goals, especially in addressing poverty reduction. In the past two and a half years, the programme has been launched in Bangladesh, Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic

⁸ ILO, *Toolkit on Poverty Reduction through Tourism* (Geneva, 2013). Available from http://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/training-materials/WCMS_162289/lang--en/index.htm.

Republic, Nepal, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam and will be implemented in Vanuatu in 2014. The “Local economic development through tourism in rural areas” project in Sri Lanka (2011-2016) focuses on facilitating and strengthening stakeholders’ capacity to mainstream and promote tourism development, providing more employment opportunities and income for vulnerable rural communities. The project is aimed at creating productive employment, decent work and income opportunities, especially, but not exclusively, for young men and women, and also contributes to the country’s risk reduction and recovery measures.

C. Internationally recognized best practices in ecotourism

24. In 2013, the Borneo Ecotourism Solutions and Technologies Society was rewarded for its innovative tourism work with the UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Non-Governmental Organizations, which recognizes knowledge creation, dissemination and innovative application in the global tourism sector. The organization supports the priorities and programme work of UNWTO, including the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the principles set out in the Millennium Development Goals. The organization’s submission, entitled “From charity to social entrepreneurship”, showed how the organization successfully shifted from its original philosophy of providing welfare to the local community to sustainable projects that empower communities for the long term by building their capacity to set up an ecotourism initiative. The objectives of the organization’s tourism initiatives are to promote sustainable tourism, in particular ecotourism, as a tool of poverty alleviation through stakeholder collaboration, capacity-building, community development and environmental conservation that offers alternative livelihoods. For example, in Indonesia, capacity training on the development of organic farming in Rungus has led to an increase in the number of successful entrepreneurs while fuelling the green economy, while in Kudat, thanks to the technical assistance received, the Bavanggazo Longhouse homestay has now become self-sustaining, providing the community with alternative employment opportunities.

25. In Bangladesh, Rupantar Ecotourism, which creates alternative livelihoods through its innovative “Conservation through ecotourism” framework, won the 2013 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund, which was created by the United States Department of State. The project was also recognized on World Tourism Day in Khulna, Bangladesh, in 2013 for addressing Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals, poverty alleviation, while contributing to the conservation of the Sundarbans, the world’s largest mangrove forest and a World Heritage Site.

26. Funding criteria used by financial institutions recognize partnerships and capacity-building that support tourism projects or programmes in developing countries. For example, the Inter-American Development Bank is fostering sustainable tourism growth in Latin America and the Caribbean. Since 2012, it has financed eight tourism projects worth \$196 million in the region, including the sustainable tourism development programme of the State of Pará, in Brazil, and the sustainable development tourism sector in Salta Province, in Argentina. In 2014, it approved support for the implementation of the Belize tourism master plan.⁹

⁹ Inter-American Development Bank, “Fostering sustainable tourism across Latin America and the Caribbean”. Available from www.iadb.org/en/topics/tourism/fostering-sustainable-tourism-in-latin-america,1604.html.

Moreover, together with the Multilateral Investment Fund, it supports increased private investment and private sector development, including support for microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises, tourism product innovation and technical cooperation to promote community-based tourism networks. Similarly, the Asian Development Bank has financed seven programmes¹⁰ with a focus on tourism since 2012, including a South Asia tourism infrastructure development project in Nepal, the national tourism sector development framework and the State government tourism investment plan of the Federated States of Micronesia, and the strengthening of the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office. The African Development Bank has one ongoing project focusing on youth and tourism enhancement, although 25 other ongoing or approved projects support the tourism sector indirectly. The World Bank continues its funding of tourism as a sustainable development strategy by funding various projects globally, including a \$45 million grant for tourism development in Haiti in May 2014.

IV. Tourism and the least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries

A. Least developed countries

27. Tourism has been identified as a priority sector for development, especially given its links to poverty eradication in 90 per cent of the least developed countries. Tourism is one of the top three exports in a majority of developing countries and the lead export for at least 11 least developed countries. Meanwhile, 29 of 48 least developed countries have selected tourism as an important sector for growth and development, given that tourism is among their top three foreign exchange earners.⁸ International tourism receipts represent as much as 6 per cent of all exports and 56 per cent of service exports of the least developed countries.¹¹ Tourism has been a main contributor in the graduation of Botswana, Cabo Verde and Maldives from their least developed country status.¹² The transformative role that tourism can play, particularly when implemented sustainably, in transforming economies was also recognized recently by the World Bank in the potential transformation of the economies and societies of sub-Saharan Africa.

B. Initiatives relating to ecotourism in the least developed countries

28. Recognizing the failure to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target, parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity agreed in Nagoya, Japan, to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The follow-up efforts of countries to achieve the Targets highlight the integration of biodiversity conservation into national policy frameworks, as well as the contribution of the tourism sector to achieving those Targets. In the Gambia, the participation of local communities was strengthened with the establishment of site management

¹⁰ In the review of the development banks, all projects with “tourism” in the title were counted, although it is acknowledged that other funded projects may directly or indirectly relate to supporting tourism development.

¹¹ UNWTO, *UNWTO Tourism Highlights*, 2014 ed. (Madrid, 2014).

¹² UNWTO, *Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook* (Madrid, 2013).

committees in all protected areas, while Myanmar and Somalia are integrating tourism into national plans or formulating sustainable tourism master plans. In countries such as Nepal, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, where nature-based tourism is a critical source of foreign exchange earning, increased management and community participation are crucial. In 2011 and 2013/14, Nepal was able to observe zero poaching of rhinoceros owing to its multi-pronged strategy involving leadership, park enforcement and sharing of tourism revenues with community stakeholders near wildlife reserves. Similarly, the Rwanda community revenue-sharing initiative allocates 5 per cent of national parks-based tourism revenue to fund socioeconomic activities that benefit the bordering local communities. Tourism has thus been recognized by Member States and others as a key to linking economic development with biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation.

C. Small island developing States

29. Tourism in islands is characterized by a unique biodiversity and rich cultural heritage; these assets provide significant tourism resources. UNWTO has been promoting sustainable tourism in small island developing States since its early stages. More recently, at the Conference on Sustainable Development of Tourism in Islands, organized jointly by UNWTO and the Government of France in September 2013, tourism was identified as a key driver of sustainable development. In addition, it was recognized that tourism and sustainable development should feature strongly on the development agenda of islands, owing in particular to its ability to support local livelihoods, address poverty alleviation and support the conservation of biodiversity and marine environments. The Conference built on the UNWTO report entitled *Challenges and Opportunities for Tourism Development in Small Island Developing States*, launched at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the conclusions contained therein will serve as input to the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in September 2014 in Samoa.

30. Tourism development has been instrumental to sustainable growth and development for many small island developing States. This is highlighted by the graduation of Cabo Verde, Maldives and Samoa from the category of least developed countries. Tourism is a principal contributor to the development of small island developing States: its total contribution to the Pacific Island economies in 2011 ranged from 35 to 53 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) for countries with high tourism arrivals, such as the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu.¹³ For those countries, the figures are projected to continue to rise, from 45 to 60 per cent by 2020, if support such as increased private sector investment and government investment in environmental technology is mobilized. However, a high dependence on the tourism sector also calls for measures to improve its resilience, as small island developing States are often exposed to natural threats, which have an impact on tourism.

¹³ World Travel and Tourism Council, *Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2012 series* (London, 2012).

D. Initiatives relevant to ecotourism in small island developing States

31. The Caribbean Challenge Initiative supports the implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as agreed by the parties, by committing to conserving at least 20 per cent of their nearshore and coast environments in national marine protected areas systems by 2020. Nine Caribbean island countries and territories¹⁴ signed the Caribbean Challenge Initiative Leaders Declaration on Marine and Coastal Resources,¹⁵ in addition to 15 companies signing the Corporate Compact, formally committing to working together towards new commitments designed to accelerate and expand efforts to safeguard the region's marine and coast environments. In the Declaration, political leaders acknowledged that the vast marine and coastal resources were a critical resource providing income, livelihoods, food security, shoreline protection, social benefits and overall economic prosperity for the people of the Caribbean, and supported the criteria of effective conservation in the Convention on Biological Diversity. The second phase of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative, launched at the Summit of Caribbean Political and Business Leaders, held in May 2013 in the British Virgin Islands, secured \$75 million in funding commitments to safeguard marine biodiversity through the establishment of more marine protected areas while addressing marine pollution, restoration, sustainable tourism, sustainable fisheries and ecosystem-based adaptation and enhancing the implementation of more sustainable business practices.

32. The European Union is funding, under the tenth European Development Fund, the Pacific Regional Tourism Capacity-Building Programme as a key component under the overall Strengthening Pacific Economic Integration through Trade project. The South Pacific Tourism Organization is the implementing agency for the Programme, whose aim is to improve the economic integration of the Pacific countries from the African, Caribbean and Pacific States through strengthened national systems and institutional frameworks to develop trade capacity, increase private sector competitiveness and increase international market access in the tourism sector.¹⁶ The Programme aligns directly with Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals, poverty alleviation, and the first pillar of the Pacific Plan, enhancing economic growth, and responds directly to the demands in the Vava'u declaration adopted by leaders of the Pacific countries from the African, Caribbean and Pacific States, in which they called for increased support to the tourism sector in achieving sustainable development.

33. The Barbados green economy scoping study synthesis report (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), University of West Indies, and Barbados, 2012) provides a practical road map for policymakers and businesses on the greening of tourism, agriculture, fisheries, transportation and building and serves as a best case

¹⁴ The Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

¹⁵ Declaration of Political Leaders at the Caribbean Challenge Initiative Summit of Political and Business Leaders, British Virgin Islands, 17 and 18 May 2013. Available from www.cbd.int/cooperation/cci/doc/leaders-declaration-en.pdf.

¹⁶ South Pacific Tourism Organization, "Pacific Regional Tourism Capacity-Building Programme: inception report and first workplan", 1 March 2012. Available from www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/EDF10_2012_PRTCBP_Inception_Report_1st_WP.pdf.

study and a model for the Caribbean. The report analysed five key economic sectors, including tourism, as well as four cross-cutting issues — water, waste, energy and land. Key recommendations for the tourism sector were the adoption and promotion of new energy and resource efficiency policies for hotels, as well as the establishment of new heritage and nature-based tourism sites. The current Barbados green economy model is shared at the regional level, at such events as the first meeting of the Caribbean Green Economy Action Learning Group, held in Saint Lucia in May 2013, and the first Caribbean Green Economy Conference, also held in Saint Lucia. The Caribbean Green Economy Initiative and the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute also use Barbados green economy policy frameworks and the Green Business Barbados programme as regional best case studies.

E. African countries

34. Many countries in Africa have opted for tourism as part of their economic development strategies. Tourism contributions vary considerably by region and within regions, with tourism being well developed in parts of Southern and East Africa, as well as parts of North Africa and in island States in the Indian Ocean. Tourism flows in sub-Saharan Africa have grown significantly in the past two decades from a small base of just 6.7 million international tourist arrivals in 1990 to 33.1 million in 2011.¹⁷ In 2013, tourism's contribution to GDP was \$36.6 billion and is forecast to rise by 4.7 per cent in 2014 and by 5.1 per cent per annum during the period 2014-2024, to \$63.0 billion by 2024.¹⁸ Africa's tourism growth potential is significant, especially its nature-based and cultural heritage assets, and was recently recognized as a driver of economic development.

35. African States face various constraints to harnessing their tourism potential. They must compete for tourists against other global destinations, cultural attractions and benchmarked international tourist facilities. Some African markets face additional challenges, including security risks, restrictive visa policies and poor infrastructure, particularly in air travel, as the cost, frequency and routing of African airlines reduces competitiveness. At the same time, according to a UNWTO 2014 working paper on the economic value of wildlife watching tourism, Africa's wildlife watching tourism is directly threatened by poaching, which has been identified as a serious issue affecting tourism development in the region, particularly in terms of biodiversity loss, and as a security threat which affects the international perception of African destinations. Although sustainable tourism is being integrated more widely into trade sectors and policies in Africa, there is a need for stronger political support, increased multisector stakeholder coordination and the implementation of standards and regulations.

F. Initiatives relevant to ecotourism in Africa

36. The World Bank sees tourism as a high priority in Africa, as stressed in its 2013 report entitled "Tourism in Africa: harnessing tourism for growth and improved livelihoods". The World Bank highlights that scaling up tourism for

¹⁷ UNWTO, *UNWTO Tourism Highlights*, 2012 ed. (Madrid, 2012).

¹⁸ World Travel and Tourism Council, *Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2014: Sub-Saharan Africa* (London, 2014).

countries with established tourism sectors involves planning, infrastructure, promotion and financing, while deepening tourism success can be achieved through diversification, strengthening human resources and closely monitoring social and environmental impacts. This builds on the New Partnership for Africa's Development Tourism Action Plan (2010-2015), which recognized tourism as one sector with the most potential to contribute to the economic regeneration of the continent, particularly through the diversification of African economies and the generation of foreign exchange earnings.

37. From mid-2009 to mid-2014, the Collaborative Actions for Sustainable Tourism project was successfully implemented in nine countries in Africa (Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles and United Republic of Tanzania). Funded by the Global Environment Facility, it was carried out by UNEP as the implementing agency, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as the executing agency and UNWTO as the associate agency. The project included components on ecotourism and on sustainable tourism governance and management, which were coordinated by UNWTO, and components on environmental management systems, reef and marine recreation and management, and knowledge management, coordinated by UNIDO. For the ecotourism component, UNWTO undertook a best practices study, organized regional capacity-building seminars for key project stakeholders, introduced the Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty methodology, delivered specific seminars on tourism and biodiversity in the Gambia, Ghana and the United Republic of Tanzania, supported the participating countries in carrying out a tourism value chain analysis in the selected demonstration sites, and worked with local partners to formulate and implement ecotourism projects in Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and the United Republic of Tanzania. Within the framework of the sustainable tourism governance and management component, UNWTO carried out field studies in each of the participating countries, which formed the basis for detailed action plans at the national and local levels, as well as a global report entitled *Sustainable Tourism Governance and Management in Coastal Areas of Africa*. The report highlights key issues and approaches of general relevance to sustainable coastal tourism in Africa. It builds on the UNWTO and UNEP publication *Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policymakers* (2005), which contains guidelines on governance structures, sustainability aims and management instruments relevant to all types of destinations.

V. Implementation of the promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection

Overall findings of the implementation surveys among Member States

38. Among the relevant findings observed in analysing the 2014 survey was the integration by a growing number of Member States of sustainable development, including ecotourism, in their existing frameworks and policies. In fact, 79 per cent of respondents indicated that they had strengthened environmental protection and natural and cultural heritage frameworks, while four countries reported the adaptation of new frameworks or the enhancement of policies and programmes that had a direct impact on local community and small tourism entrepreneurs in order to

assure the sustainable development of tourism. Since reporting to the General Assembly in 2012, Argentina, Egypt, India, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, South Africa and Viet Nam have launched new national or regional tourism development strategies or revised existing frameworks in order to enhance sustainability while responding to changing global economic, sociocultural and environmental conditions.

39. Tourism development is subject to national legislation; as a result, development initiatives require environmental impact assessments or evaluations, public consultations and business/tourism licensing. This is highlighted by 85 per cent of respondents, who reported conducting impact assessments or evaluations of the impact of sustainable tourism. Several countries, including Australia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Spain, conduct environmental impact assessments as part of national environmental legislation. In the case of Morocco, the protection of the environment has been strengthened by being built into the National Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development. For others, impact assessments, such as climate change impacts on tourism (Austria), consumption behaviour patterns (Croatia) and national market research (Colombia), are conducted by national authorities.

40. Aside from integrating sustainable tourism into national legislation and policies, a majority of the countries highlighted initiatives that target the increased participation of indigenous and local communities and women. For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo allocates 5 per cent of income generated from ecotourism to the local communities, especially women who engage in income-generating activities. In Burkina Faso, economic empowerment is a high priority, with women being supported financially and technically to manage ecotourism projects, such as in Tambili, Bazoulé and Tambaga. In the Dominican Republic, the creation of the Solidarity Banking Entrepreneurship Programme supports women who have the knowledge and/or experience to undertake new businesses. The banking partnership created a Guarantee Fund to support women micro-entrepreneurs in obtaining credit for the development of their business plans. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska implemented the programme “Women as leaders of the development of rural tourism”, which includes training women from rural areas on how to start and operate their own businesses. The Nicaragua Tourism Board has developed a gender strategy for the tourism sector for 2013-2018, which contributes directly to the reduction of gender inequalities in the sector. Tunisia has implemented a project that aims to contribute to the preservation of desert biodiversity and the sustainability of arid lands in three national parks through a new approach to protected area management that integrates ecotourism development and community involvement.

41. A key challenge in the promotion of sustainable tourism for poverty eradication and environment protection reported repeatedly by Member States was facilitating access by small and medium-sized enterprises to financial capital. Among the responding countries, Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported facing challenges in the implementation of policies, the integration of tourism in the early stages of planning, conducting assessments, facilitating access to financial capital, increasing the empowerment of women in tourism, and increasing the participation of indigenous and local communities owing to a lack of skilled workers and financial capital. For Andorra, the Czech Republic, Guatemala, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Paraguay and Slovenia, key challenges identified in the

implementation of ecotourism policies at the national or regional level include the mobilization of financial resources, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses, and skilled personnel. Morocco identified the need to strengthen local government and empower local actors at the early stages of planning and development in order for national tourism strategies to be fully integrated into development.

42. In its resolution [67/223](#), the General Assembly encouraged the provision of technical assistance in strengthening policy frameworks for ecotourism implementation. Among the respondents providing development assistance, including Austria, Australia and Germany, international programmes supporting countries in Africa, Asia, Central America and Eastern Europe were focused on promoting sustainable development that targets poverty eradication and environment protection. For example, Germany's projects (through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) include assisting the Lao People's Democratic Republic in the development of a tourism strategy for the protected areas of Hin Nam No; promoting community-based ecotourism management in the Tsinjoriake protected area in Madagascar; and assisting Angola, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe with tourism development and the promotion of the Kavango-Zambezi transfrontier conservation area. The Government of Japan is collaborating with the Government of Colombia in the "One village, one product" initiative in order to improve living conditions and community involvement. A worldwide movement, the initiative focuses on local origin, self-management and human resources development through the identification of local products for the revitalization of municipalities, including ecotourism and agritourism. Currently, in Colombia 12 such initiatives are being strengthened through partnerships and joint actions. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso and Colombia highlighted that foremost among their assistance needs was developing tourism skills, producing awareness-raising materials and developing sustainable tourism guidelines.

43. Support for intercountry and subregional cooperation in promoting ecotourism as a means to achieve economic growth and reduce inequalities and as a livelihood alternative has been indicated in the Member States' responses. Some countries, including Cameroon, Croatia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Guatemala, are involved in intercountry, subregional and international cooperation initiatives to promote wildlife protection, particularly through transboundary biosphere or transfrontier parks. A significant number of countries are cooperating in order to preserve natural and cultural heritage. For example, the Honduran Institute of Tourism works closely with the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History in heritage restoration projects, such as the fort of San Fernando de Omoa, creating new tourism attractions that will strengthen the existing circuit in the region while protecting the habitat at the site. Intercountry and subregional cooperation also offers a platform for the dissemination of best practices through regional and subregional workshops on good environmental practices, including ecotourism. In addition, several countries highlighted that they participated in regional and international meetings, exchanges or conferences. For example, Brunei Darussalam reported that the "One village, one product" programme provided greater exposure and employment opportunities for villages, through the Made in Brunei Expo and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Consumer Fair, which showcased locally made products, such as traditional handicrafts, embroidery and foodstuffs.

44. A majority of responding countries provided updates on relevant initiatives and projects since 2012: 69 per cent of them stated that their best practices were influencing development in other regions or sites. In Burkina Faso, for example, capacity-building, training and the development of new tourism products in Logobou and Tambaga have had a ripple effect on neighbouring communities with similar natural capital that now wish to revive tourism activities around their natural resources. Since 2012, the Czech Republic has developed more than 1,000 km of long-distance cycling routes in the “EuroVelo” trail, which follows sustainable development guidelines, including monitoring specific points through automatic counters. In addition, along the four new EuroVelo routes, new small and medium-sized enterprises are being established, which are important for regional development. In Turkey, the Eastern Anatolia Tourism Development Project, implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in partnership with UNDP, focuses on transforming the Coruh Valley into an alternative tourism destination by increasing awareness, conducting training programmes for local stakeholders, strengthening local partnerships and developing such events as the Coruh Valley Birdwatching Festival in order to eradicate poverty. Such cooperative ecotourism initiatives highlight how the integration of sustainable development in the tourism sector can address the Millennium Development Goals.

45. Investing in innovation, energy efficiency and renewable resources and putting an economic value on resources are likely to be key strategies to ensure the future sustainability of the tourism sector. Some countries are integrating green initiatives into their national policy frameworks. Greece responded that its “green tourism” action was a strategic choice towards adopting green technologies and energy- and water-saving measures for all types of accommodations. In Bulgaria, the main focus of the new National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development, 2014-2030, is strengthening the competitiveness and efficiency of the tourism sector, including the implementation of energy efficiency measures and standards in the tourism sector. These include increasing the use of innovative systems, exchanging know-how and good practices in energy management and eco-management, minimizing energy use and introducing environmental management systems and standards. In Austria, the main findings of a study entitled “Climate change and tourism in Austria 2030”, commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, were summarized in sector-specific documents which were made available to all 1,600 tourism communities, as well as to service providers. Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Honduras and Slovenia called for increased dissemination, exchange and transfer of effective innovation systems that will minimize the environmental and sociocultural impact of tourism.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

46. The important role of sustainable tourism for development has been acknowledged in various forums, such as the Group of 20 and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. In paragraphs 130 and 131 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Heads of State and Government, inter alia, encouraged the promotion of investment in sustainable tourism, including ecotourism and cultural tourism.

47. Progress in the promotion of ecotourism has resulted in its being incorporated into national policy and priorities. States and international

development institutions are increasingly recognizing the importance of cooperation in ecotourism as a means to achieve economic growth, reduce inequalities and improve livelihoods in developing countries. A majority of countries are engaged in cooperative initiatives, and some States responded that they wanted regional and international institutions to prioritize the provision of adequate support to programmes and projects relating to ecotourism, which includes both financial and technical assistance. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish to:

(a) Recommend that all Member States review their current tourism frameworks and policies in order to ensure that the promotion of sustainable tourism for poverty eradication and environment protection is adequately robust;

(b) Encourage Governments, international organizations and the tourism sector to continue to assess and monitor the environmental impacts of tourism while evaluating the effectiveness of various forms of tourism in terms of alleviating poverty, protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development;

(c) Invite Governments and relevant stakeholders to consider using tourism to engage indigenous and local communities in order to preserve indigenous knowledge and know-how, which may lead to innovative tourism strategies that promote sustainable development;

(d) Encourage Governments, international organizations and the tourism sector to improve efforts to measure the role of sustainable tourism in order to allow more evidence-based decision-making, especially in the context of other economic activities;

(e) Invite Governments and other relevant stakeholders interested in creating a national model to establish and join the framework of the UNWTO Global Observatory of Sustainable Tourism in order to improve sustainable development, share best practices and monitor the impact of sustainable tourism on poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability;

(f) Encourage all relevant stakeholders to provide more evidence-based information on how women are integrated into the planning of and decisions on tourism development;

(g) Invite Governments and relevant stakeholders to support local and regional efforts in conservation, including anti-poaching activities. Support for biodiversity conservation can be increased through the dissemination of information and awareness campaigns to all relevant stakeholders, including tourists and national tourism and protected areas authorities;

(h) Invite Governments and international and other relevant organizations to highlight and support best practices in relation to the implementation of relevant guidelines in the tourism sector and to implement and disseminate existing guidelines more widely. This includes:

(i) Support for local business best practice models which support ecotourism development that targets poverty alleviation and conservation;

(ii) **Regional models, such as transboundary parks, marine protected areas and protected corridors, that encourage cooperative environmental and social management;**

(iii) **Application of principles laid out in the UNWTO mechanism for poverty alleviation through tourism under the Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty initiative and of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism;**

(i) **Encourage Governments, the United Nations and specialized agencies to support the coordination and alignment of regional and/or international ecotourism development frameworks in order to assist countries in promoting ecotourism that actively supports poverty alleviation and environment protection;**

(j) **Encourage Governments, the tourism sector and relevant organizations to adopt policies and practices to promote the full participation and involvement of local and indigenous communities, in addition to the full empowerment of women, in all tourism operations and development;**

(k) **Invite relevant specialized agencies, United Nations bodies, other organizations and multilateral financial institutions to provide technical assistance to Governments to assist, as appropriate, in:**

(i) **Strengthening legislative and policy frameworks and their implementation in the context of tourism, including the dissemination of ecotourism knowledge to regional and national organizations to increase awareness;**

(ii) **Identifying needs and opportunities for interventions to improve tourism's contribution to poverty reduction, securing wider community benefits from tourism as one of the most viable and sustainable economic development options;**

(iii) **Facilitating the understanding of and capacity to identify priorities and appropriate actions for intervention in the field of sustainable tourism development and/or ecotourism;**

(iv) **Building capacity, in particular through workshops that support marketing and product positioning for local communities, grass-roots organizations and small and medium-sized businesses;**

(v) **Design and develop ecotourism products that can ensure market access and can be offered as complementary products in the region;**

(vi) **Development of awareness-raising materials that target women's empowerment and the youth culture;**

(l) **Invite the United Nations, specialized agencies and relevant stakeholders to improve the transfer, application, financing and dissemination of innovative technology, especially green technology, to the tourism sector in order to strengthen destinations' competitiveness while increasing environmental protection and to expand employment opportunities or livelihood diversification.**

Annex

Survey of the World Tourism Organization on the implementation of resolution 67/223 on the promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection

List of respondents (as at 30 June 2014)

1. Andorra
2. Australia^a
3. Austria^a
4. Bosnia and Herzegovina^a
5. Brunei Darussalam^a
6. Bulgaria
7. Burkina Faso^a
8. Cameroon
9. Colombia^a
10. Costa Rica
11. Croatia^a
12. Czech Republic
13. Democratic Republic of the Congo
14. Dominican Republic^a
15. El Salvador
16. Germany
17. Greece
18. Guatemala
19. Honduras
20. Iran (Islamic Republic of)^a
21. Lithuania
22. Morocco
23. Nicaragua^a
24. Panama
25. Paraguay
26. Slovenia^a
27. Spain^a
28. Sri Lanka^a
29. Tunisia
30. Turkey^a

^a Also responded to the survey conducted in 2012.