

22nd session of the UNWTO General Assembly
Guidelines for the General Debate on
'Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals: Journey to 2030' (rev. 2)
13-16 September 2017, Chengdu, China

BACKGROUND

The 2030 Agenda: A universal plan of action for people, planet and prosperity

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which outline a universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world until 2030.

Building on the historic Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs - together with 169 associated targets - lay out a new plan of action for people, planet and prosperity for all countries. It entails that the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental - are managed in an integrated and balanced manner.

Tourism: A key sector for achieving the SDGs

Tourism can be a powerful vehicle to promote and reach the milestones of the ambitious agenda, given that it is one of the major sectors in the global economy, namely in international trade, and a major job and wealth creator for developed and developing countries.

Tourism explicitly features as a target 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.

Yet, given the sheer size and the crosscutting nature of the sector, tourism can strongly contribute - directly and indirectly - to all 17 SDGs.

Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals: Journey to 2030

On the occasion of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 (IY2017), and given the impetus of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Tourism Organization



(UNWTO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are jointly producing a report on 'Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals: Journey to 2030'.

The report aims to provide a roadmap for the tourism sector and beyond (international community, development partners, etc.) on how to implement and achieve the universal development agenda and the SDGs through tourism.

'Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals: Journey to 2030' will empower, influence and inspire governments, policymakers, companies and the tourism sector at large to intensify their engagement in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, by integrating relevant aspects of the 17 SDGs in the policy and financing frameworks as well as building new business models and demonstrating how tourism can effectively contribute to achieving the 17 SDGs.

GENERAL DEBATE

Objective

In the context of the 22nd session of the UNWTO General Assembly, the aim of the General Debate on 'Tourism and the SDGs' is to invite tourism ministers and heads of delegation to discuss how the tourism sector can benefit from and contribute to the achievement of the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national and global levels.

The Debate will be based on the initial findings of the *Tourism and SDGs Policy Brief* (see scoping paper in Annex 1) stemming from the 'Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals: Journey to 2030' report and aims to shape a roadmap for tourism policymakers, the private sector, UNWTO and the sector at large to embrace sustainable practices and maximize the contribution of tourism to the global development agenda. In particular, it will spark innovative ideas and set recommendations for action towards 2030.

The General Debate will be preceded by a High-Level Segment on the morning of 13 September 2017 on 'Sustainable Development Goals & Building Partnerships for Development – The example of the Belt and Road Tourism Initiative' (programme to be communicated).

For fruitful and lively participation in the General Debate, the Secretariat proposes that delegations focus their statements on the following issues:

1. How can tourism help in achieving the SDGs in your country?
2. What are the SDGs that tourism can best contribute to in your country?
3. How to make tourism an integral part of the national governance structure for the SDGs and effectively incorporate tourism in national development plans.
4. How can existing frameworks help us further integrate the SDGs in tourism planning?
5. How can policymakers incentivize the private sector to implement sustainable business practices and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies to achieve the SDGs? What public/private sector partnerships can be built in this area?

6. How to influence and garner further support from the donor community to channel more funds to the tourism sector, helping to unlock its potential to drive SDGs achievement.
7. How can tourism policymakers in developed countries help catalyze an increase of official development assistance (ODA) for tourism from their development cooperation departments to intensify aid and investment for tourism in developing countries?
8. What innovative financing mechanisms can complement traditional ODA and development cooperation to strengthen tourism's ability to reach the SDGs and its targets?

Procedure

Delegations wishing to take the floor during the General Debate are kindly requested to e-mail the Secretariat by 31 August (zyakovleva@unwto.org) indicating "General Debate" in the subject.

The Secretariat will place their names on a speakers' list so that the Debate may be organized as satisfactorily as possible. In view of time constraints, it is essential to limit the speaking time of each head of delegation to a maximum of three minutes.

Simultaneous interpretation will be available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Written statements delivered during the debate of the General Assembly will not be translated.

Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals

Scoping paper

22nd Session of the UNWTO General Assembly

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The combination of effective and robust policy frameworks, enhanced private sector action, and a more holistic approach to development cooperation can help strengthen the role of tourism as a positive force of change, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The entire tourism community, including policymakers, companies and other tourism stakeholders, as well as the development community at large, can and should be ready to act together. This scoping paper presents the initial findings of the *Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals - Journey to 2030* research, and aims to stimulate the discussion among policymakers at the 22nd UNWTO General Assembly on how to advance the contribution of tourism to the SDGs.

After the historic agreement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2016 began as the first year of country-planning and implementation on the SDGs. The shift from commitment to actions and results can only be achieved if sustainable development moves from the periphery to the core of decision-making in both public and private domains. While the universal SDGs offer a new direction, tourism can and must play a leadership role in delivering a better future for people and the planet. An economic powerhouse that represents 10% of world GDP¹, 30% of services exports² and 1 out of every 11 jobs in the world³, tourism was the third world category in export earnings in 2015⁴ and produces profound and wide-ranging impacts across all dimensions of sustainable development. Tourism can thus contribute — directly and indirectly — to the achievement of all 17 SDGs, from generating inclusive growth and eradicating extreme poverty to combatting climate change, from fostering gender equality to conserving marine and terrestrial ecosystems. It can also, if not well managed, contribute to destroying our unique cultural assets, harming the environment and disturbing social structures.

Against this backdrop, and on the occasion of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 (IY2017), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), together with other partners, are joining forces to produce the ***Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030*** report with a view to disentangle tourism's connection with the SDGs in public policy, the private sector and development cooperation. The report aims to (i) generate knowledge, (ii) empower stakeholders, and (iii) inspire action for the tourism sector to fully embrace sustainable development. Drawing a parallel between SDG achievement through tourism and the five key areas of the IY2017⁵ — i) sustainable economic growth, (ii) social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction, (iii) resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change, (iv) cultural values, diversity and heritage, (v) mutual understanding, peace and security — the final report will incorporate the experiences and lessons learned from a variety of tourism and global stakeholders, and establish a comprehensive roadmap and framework for achieving the 2030 Agenda through tourism. The final report will be presented at the closing ceremony of the IY2017 in December 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The scoping paper revolves around the following three themes:

¹ Direct, indirect and induced impact. Source: World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

² World Tourism Organization (2016a) *Tourism Highlights 2016 Edition*. Madrid: UNWTO.

³ Direct, indirect and induced impact. Source: World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

⁴ World Tourism Organization (2016a) *Tourism Highlights 2016 Edition*. Madrid: UNWTO.

⁵ See: <http://www.tourism4development2017.org/why-tourism/> (30-07-2017).

(1) Public policy: 22 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)⁶ that were submitted to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)⁷ in 2016 are analyzed to understand how countries perceive the tourism sector in relation to the SDGs. The research aims to identify key drivers of SDG implementation, the context in which tourism is mentioned and how it relates to the SDGs. It also seeks to identify reported opportunities, challenges and threats associated with tourism. The findings will shed light on opportunities for tourism to become more firmly integrated in national SDG planning and provide key recommendations for tourism policymakers to be fully part of that process.

(2) Private sector: The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) actions of 60 large tourism companies — representing accommodation, transport, tour operators, and other travel intermediaries — are analyzed and matched with the 17 SDGs, in particular with 67 pre-identified SDG targets that apply to tourism. The results of the gap analysis shall lead to a ‘tourism compact’ for the private sector, as well as to recommendations for policymakers to create incentives for more sustainable business practices, in line with the SDGs.

(3) Development cooperation: The above-mentioned VNRs, together with other relevant sources, are also examined with regard to tourism’s role in development cooperation. Key questions include whether tourism is identified as a sector for development cooperation, and what actions could trigger further support and investment in terms of Official Development Assistance (ODA)⁸ or other means. The findings shall give an indication on how to leverage ODA and develop innovative financing frameworks for tourism and the SDGs. They shall lead to key recommendations for tourism policymakers to attract and channel more funds to tourism.

1. The SDGs in public policy

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”⁹. Under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the HLPF plays a key role in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In 2016, a total of 22 countries offered to present their VNRs to the HLPF, a number that has doubled in 2017. It should be noted, however, that the VNRs of 2016 were the very first attempts to monitor progress on the implementation of the SDGs, and while they can provide a good indication of the countries’ intent, the actual level of implementation remains naturally to be seen. A thorough follow-up and review, ideally in 4–5 year cycles, will signal whether or not the aims have been effectively converted into policy action, including in National Sectorial Policies (NP) for Tourism.

For the purpose of this scoping paper, all 22 VNRs of 2016 were analyzed (the final report will include the 43 VNRs presented in 2017) to identify the role of tourism in national strategies of both developed and developing countries, and the means through which tourism can both benefit from and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

The set-up of institutional frameworks and mechanisms, which varies from country to country, is pertinent to the shaping of national policies, including for tourism. While some countries assign responsibility of SDG implementation and coordination to the highest level of government, others may opt for implementation that is coordinated by specific ministries. Some countries reported undertaking assessments of how to incorporate the SDGs in existing development plans, whereas others have embraced them in the formulation of new plans.

The analysis of the VNRs aims to pinpoint the key drivers as well as national and international actors responsible for SDG implementation. It seeks to identify the extent to which tourism is perceived and included in national

⁶ Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on the SDGs are presented by UN member states as a basis for the regular reviews by the HLPF. They aim to facilitate the exchange of experiences and lessons learned with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The full report will include the 22 VNRs of 2016 as well as the 43 VNRs of 2017. The 22 VNRs of the HLPF 2016 are available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf> (23-07-2017).

⁷ The High-level Political Forum is the UN’s central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf> (30-07-2017).

⁸ Official Development Assistance (ODA) is defined as government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. Loans and credits for military purposes are excluded. Source: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), available at <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm> (29-07-17).

⁹ United Nations (2015), *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Paragraph 79, available at http://www.un.org/qa/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E (24-07-2017).

planning, and how it relates to the SDGs and their targets. These findings will shed light on untapped opportunities for tourism policymakers and stakeholders to take part in the formulation of national SDG strategies, making tourism a key driver thereof.

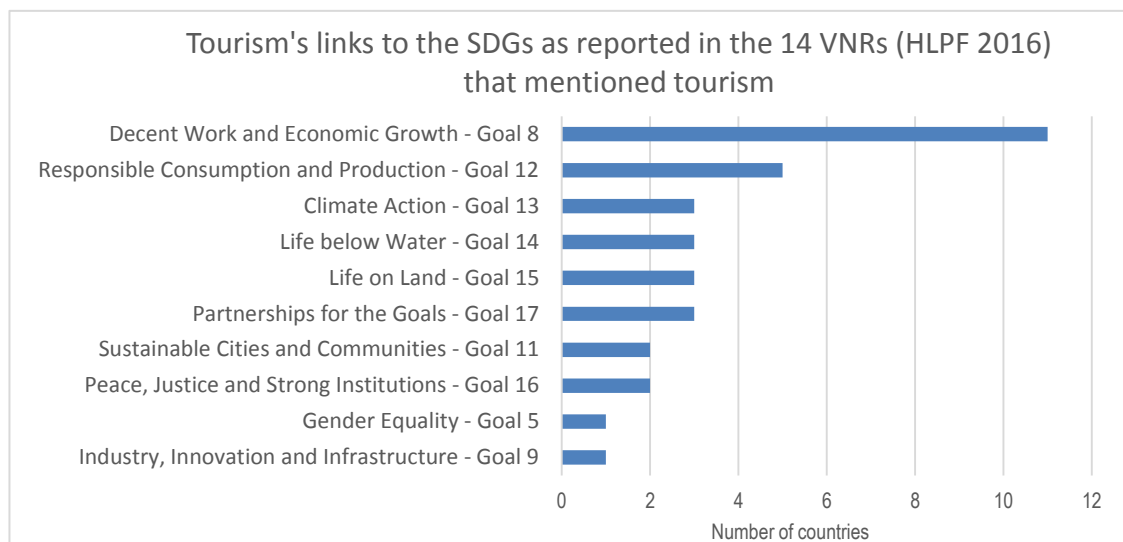
Of the 22 countries that presented their VNRs in 2016, **14 countries mentioned tourism**. The government of Montenegro has tasked its Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism to oversee and coordinate SDG implementation, whereas a further five countries mentioned the Ministry of Tourism in their VNRs, namely Colombia, Georgia, Mexico, Morocco and Sierra Leone. The 14 countries making reference to tourism (ten developing countries and four developed countries) related the sector to different themes and issues, going beyond the three SDGs in which tourism is explicitly featured, namely SDGs 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 14 (Life below Water). The context in which tourism is mentioned in the VNRs corresponds — directly or indirectly — with 10 specific SDGs, and is shown in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Countries' mention of tourism in relation to the SDGs, as reported in 14 VNRs (HLPF 2016)

	SDG	Theme	Developing Countries	Developed Countries
Mention of tourism in relation to the SDGs	Goal 8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Colombia, Egypt, Georgia, Montenegro, Mexico, Uganda, Venezuela, Philippines, Sierra Leone	France, Germany
	Goal 12	Responsible Consumption and Production	Montenegro, Mexico, Uganda	France, Germany
	Goal 13	Climate Action	Colombia, Egypt, Montenegro	
	Goal 14	Life below Water	Egypt, Mexico,	Norway
	Goal 15	Life on Land	Montenegro, Uganda	Estonia,
	Goal 17	Partnerships for the Goals	Uganda	Estonia, Germany
	Goal 11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Montenegro, Sierra Leone	
	Goal 16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Colombia, Egypt	
	Goal 5	Gender Equality	Colombia	
	Goal 9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Uganda	
No mention of tourism in relation to the SDGs			China, Madagascar, Samoa, Togo, Turkey	Finland, Republic of Korea, Switzerland

Tourism is often seen as a sector for progress when mentioned: eleven countries recognized the sector for its economic contribution and its ability to create jobs and stimulate inclusive growth, and as such by its contribution in achieving SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Five VNRs linked tourism with topics related to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and three with SDGs 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life below Water), 15 (Life on Land) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), as shown in figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Tourism's links to the SDGs as reported in the 14 VNRs (HLPF 2016) that mentioned tourism



Despite tourism's link to ten SDGs in the 14 VNRs, no country associated tourism directly with SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 or 10, which address the issues of poverty, food security, health and well-being, education, water and sanitation, clean energy and inequalities, respectively. UNWTO's review of the SDGs, however, revealed that tourism can in fact be linked to more than 60 of the SDGs' 169 targets, and can thus contribute to all Goals. Hence, these first findings of the VNR analysis demonstrate that there are important gaps that ought to be considered and addressed by policymakers, and possibly other tourism stakeholders, in ensuring a better recognition and use of tourism at national level to achieve the SDGs¹⁰.

Tourism and the SDGs in the VNRs: Opportunities, challenges and threats

Opportunities

Colombia's VNR stated that its tourism sector has grown more than the national economy. An improved security situation and the exploitation of ecotourism's potential has made tourism a viable economic alternative, while contributing to peace in the country's post-conflict era, and as such directly impacting on SDGs 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Furthermore, Montenegro mentioned that the greening of tourism will have a dramatic impact on the greening of the entire economy, suggesting that improved resource efficiency in tourism provides an opportunity to achieve SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and in particular target 12.2¹¹.

Challenges

Nevertheless, four countries — Colombia, Egypt, Montenegro and Uganda — also reported challenges associated with tourism. Uganda, for instance, indicated that there are difficulties in aligning some SDG targets with its Second National Development Plan (NDPII), including SDG target 12.b¹² on tourism, given that there is neither data available to measure the number of sustainable tourism strategies, nor is there any baseline data. Montenegro reported that the attractiveness of the country as a tourist destination has led to rapid urbanization, conversion of agricultural land into construction land, and a severe pressure on the coastal area, referring to the challenges the country faces in regard to SDGs 14 (Life below Water) and 15 (Life on Land), among others. Colombia noted that only around 1% of employment is based on tourism, with women's representation in the

¹⁰ See: <http://icr.unwto.org/publication/tourism-and-sustainable-development-goals> (31-07-2017).

¹¹ SDG target 12.2: "By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources".

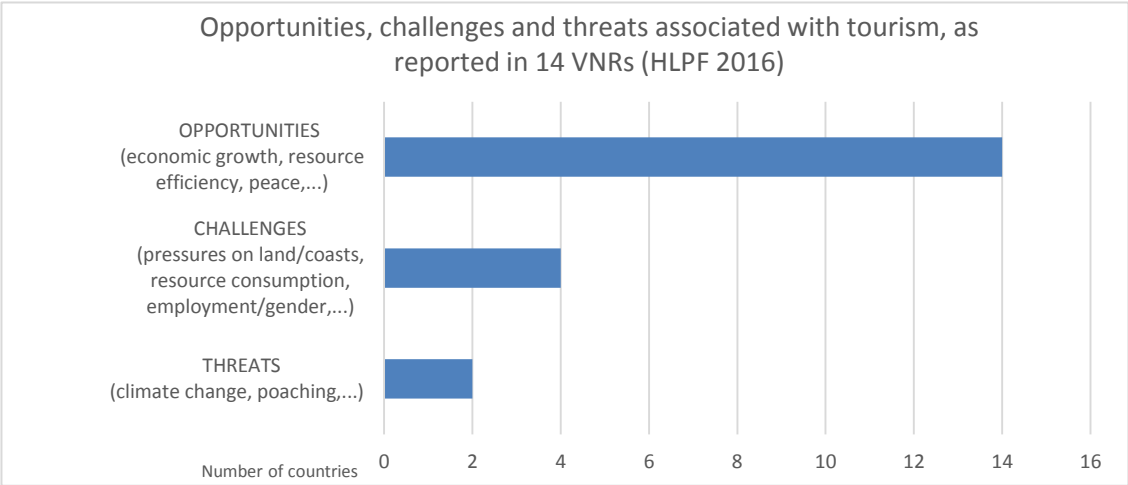
¹² SDG target 12.b: "Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products".

tourism workforce two times higher than men's. Other challenges associated with tourism included issues such as resource consumption and efficiency, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and wildlife poaching.

Threats

In addition, Egypt and Uganda reported threats to their respective countries' tourism sectors. Egypt stressed that instability in the region has had negative spill-over effects on the Egyptian economy, including the tourism sector. Climate change is also a major concern for the country as the rise in sea water levels negatively affects the coastal areas, leading to business loss in tourism. Referring to SDG 13 (Climate Action), the country stated that based on the half-meter scenario, estimated losses of land, installations, and tourism will exceed USD 32.5 billion. An average business loss is estimated at USD 127 million/year because most tourist facilities such as hotels and camps are located within 200–300 meters of the shoreline. Uganda, on the other hand, reported that — in line with SDG 15 (Life on Land) and its target 15.7¹³ — one of its development goals is to combat poaching and eliminate the problem of wildlife dispersal, which is deemed to hinder the maximum development of tourist attractions and amenities.

Figure 1.3 Opportunities, challenges and threats associated with tourism, as reported in 14 VNRs (HLPF 2016)



Methodologies for mapping tourism at the national level for the SDGs

The roll-out of the 2030 Agenda represents a crucial opportunity to mobilize the UN Development System and to leverage its comparative advantages to contribute to the global development agenda. MAPS (Mainstreaming, Acceleration, Policy and Support) is the common approach adopted by the UN Development Group to frame support for SDG implementation. A series of integrated MAPS missions to support SDG mainstreaming in 50 countries globally has been initiated: nine missions were completed in 2016 and a further 40 countries are expected to follow.

The missions review the alignment of countries' strategies with the SDGs and — where agreed with the Government — SDG roadmaps are being produced that will outline the plans for mainstreaming and implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the country level. The [Road Map for SDG Implementation in Jamaica](#), for example, outlines critical steps towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, covering its alignment with national priorities, acceleration, financing, data requirements, institutional coordination and advocacy. The development of the tourism sector is included in the prosperity pillar under the “Strengthening supply chain in agriculture, manufacturing and tourism, with a focus on MSME” heading while the sector is repeatedly mentioned in the

¹³ SDG target 15.7: “Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products”.

relevant environmental sections. The revision of the missions' findings will complement the VNR analysis in the final UNWTO/UNDP report in elaborating how countries include tourism in SDG planning.

2. The tourism private sector and the SDGs

Private companies are a key pillar of the tourism sector. Their strategies, business models and practices will determine how the sector will respond to the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda fosters the convergence of intent from private and public actors towards sustainability and inclusive growth. However, the private sector has come to recognize that its contribution should be integrated into companies' core business and should be an inherent part of the creation of value to succeed in today's markets.¹⁴

The starting point of this research was to analyze Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of 60 large tourism companies — representing accommodation, transport, tour operators, and other travel intermediaries — from all major regions and, mostly, operating globally, and to match them with the 17 SDGs in order to scope the various tourism industries' contribution to the 2030 Agenda.

For the purpose of this report, CSR activities were monitored through public reporting and clustered into 54 impact categories, building on the previous UNWTO research on Tourism and the MDGs¹⁵. These initial findings will be corroborated with opinions from experts, the debates at the 22nd UNWTO General Assembly, and discussions with industry leaders.

Companies' CSR actions

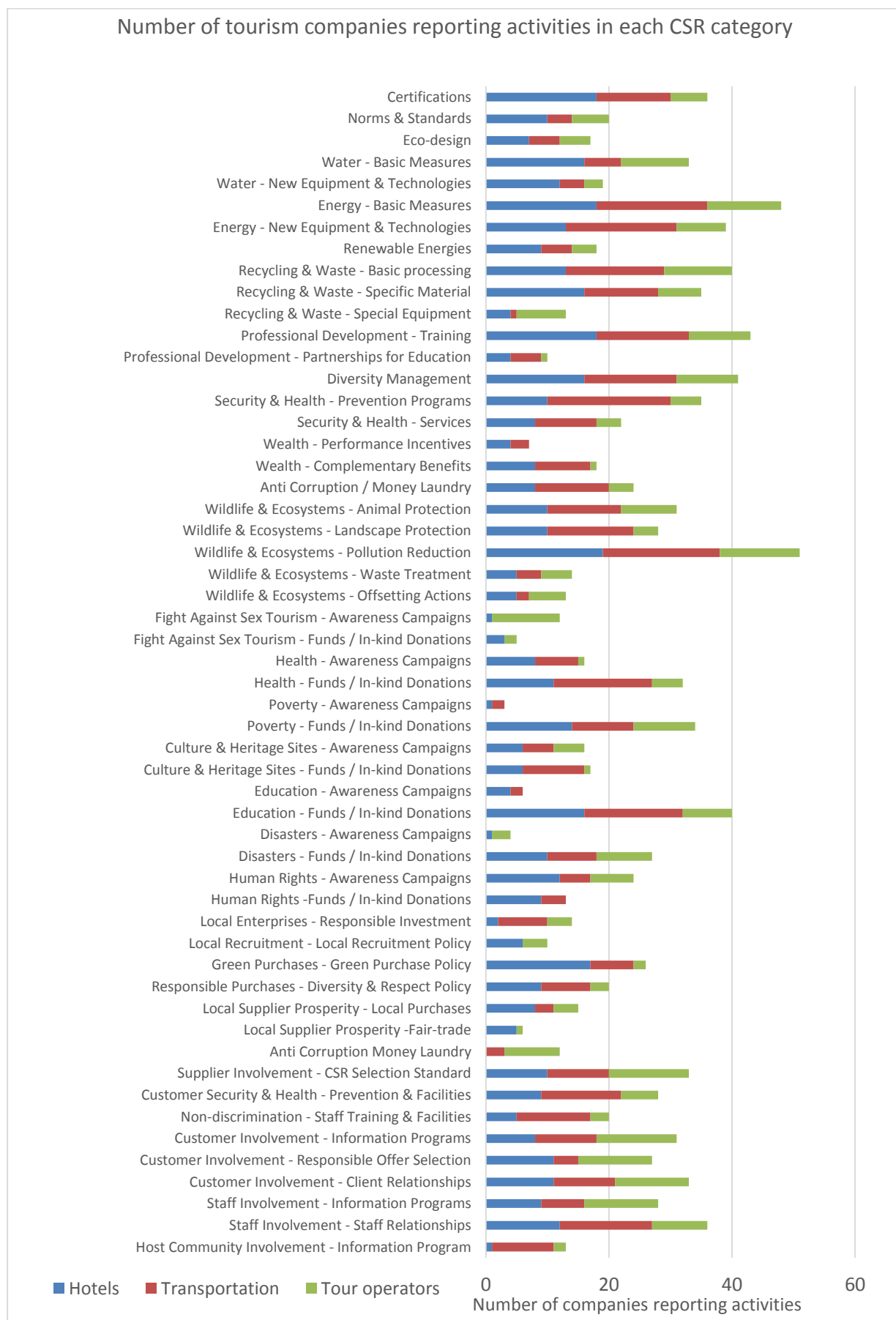
Most companies focus their CSR reporting on measures of energy, pollution reduction, staff training and diversity management. Figure 2.1 shows the number of tourism companies that reported on each of the CSR actions. **Hotel companies** reported on more CSR activities than transportation companies and tour operators. One reason for this may be the likelihood of hotels being locally engaged in their destinations or feeling a stronger responsibility towards local communities, while their operations often depend on the destinations' regulations and markets, as well as the availability of human capital, utilities, goods and services.

Hotel companies' CSR activities address a wide range of issues, including energy-saving, waste and pollution reduction, training and education. **Transportation companies** are active in energy-saving, security and health as well as pollution reduction, and as such are primarily addressing the specific externalities of their industry when contributing to the SDGs. **Tour operators and intermediaries** tend to focus their CSR action on their suppliers and customers, and involve them in information programmes, selection standards, responsible offer selection, and relationship management. They usually have limited or no involvement in source countries or local destinations.

¹⁴ UNDP and Deloitte (2016) *Uncharted Waters: Blending Value and Values for Social Impact Through the SDGs*, available at: www.businesscalltoaction.org/sites/default/files/resources/MeasuringImpact_web_0.pdf (27-07-2017).

¹⁵ UNWTO (2010) *Tourism and the Millennium Development Goals*, available at: <http://icr.unwto.org/publication/tourism-mdgs> (24-07-2017).

Figure 2.1 Number of tourism companies reporting activities in each CSR category



As part of the analysis, the CSR activities were classified depending on the type of impact. The differentiation between prosperity (economic dimension), people (social dimension), and planet (environmental and climate dimension) is important to gauge the contribution to the different SDGs. Some CSR actions can be attributed to more than one grouping.

Figure 2.2 Number of CSR activities in tourism companies reported per type of impact



The focus of most CSR activities is on the environmental or social impact while investment in training and education, as well as stakeholder involvement and promoting local employment, supplier contracting and client relationships are less popular. One reason for this could be that these activities may not always be considered as CSR, but rather as part of normal business operations, and thus are not mentioned in the CSR reports. However, this concurs with the important notion that an inclusive and sustainable development should be embedded in tourism companies' business strategies and beyond, building linkages at destination level across the extended tourism value chain, which includes agriculture, food processing, and artisanal production.

The business case for sustainability is also visible in the areas where companies engage in CSR activities. As Figure 2.3 shows, companies across all three tourism industries engage primarily in actions that relate to their internal management (business operations) and host community support activities.

Internal management actions demonstrate that building competitiveness is the business response to sustainability and is not anchored in philanthropy or donations. Profitability remains a key driver of sustainability for the private sector.

Figure 2.3 Number of CSR activities in tourism companies reported per area of engagement

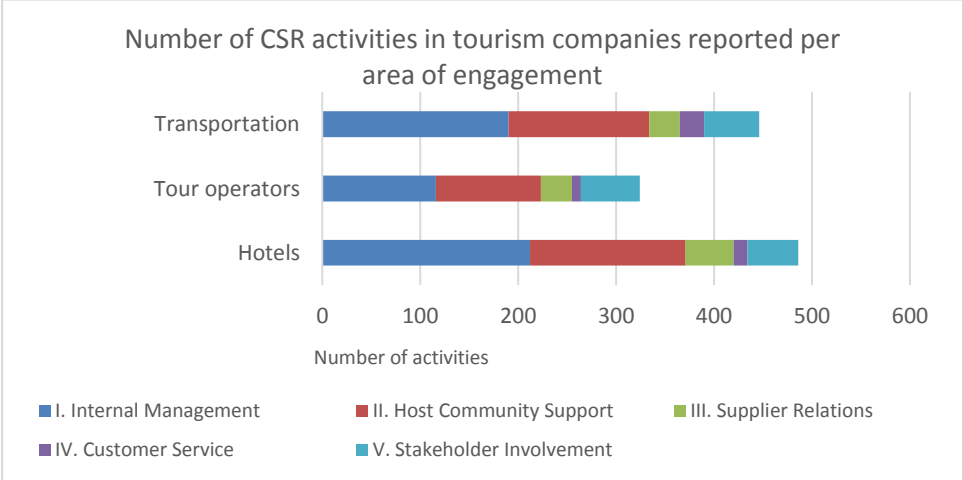
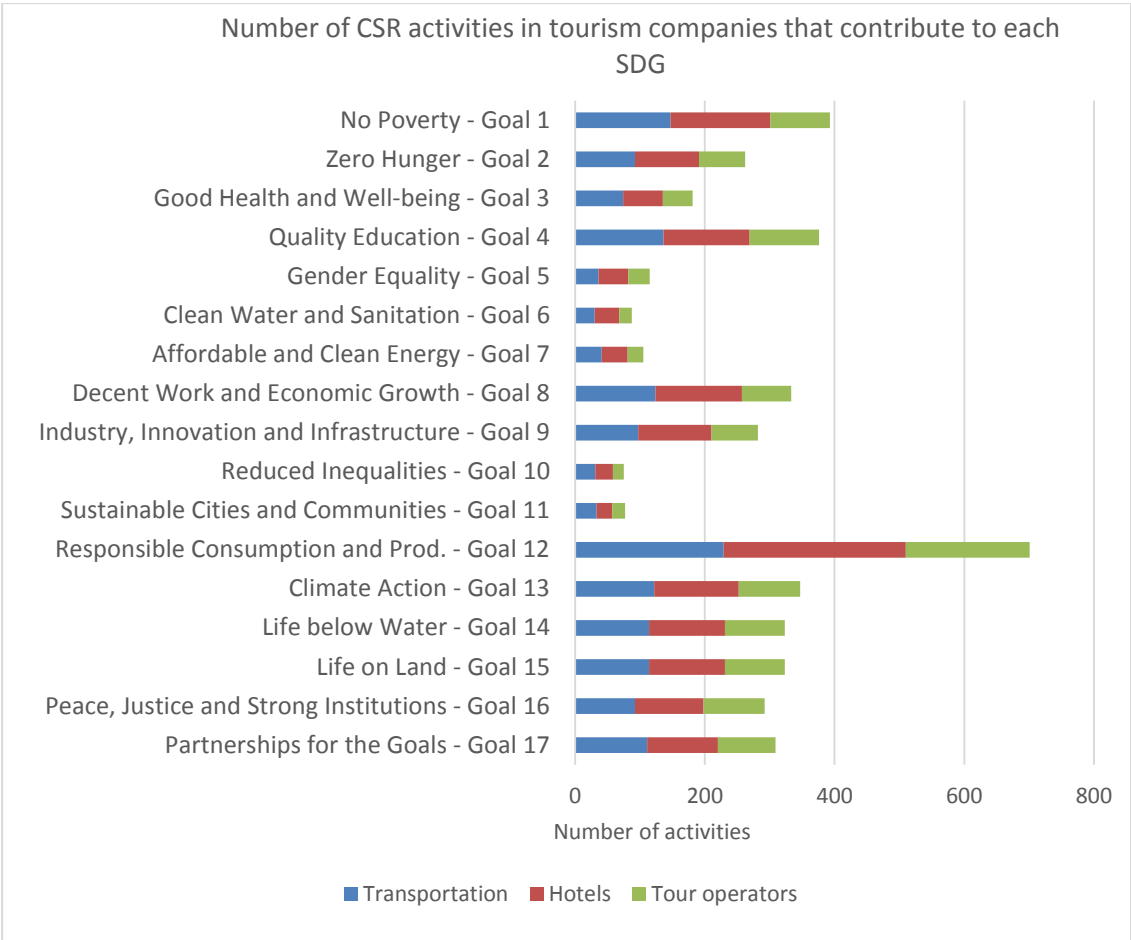


Figure 2.4 Number of CSR activities in tourism companies that contribute to each SDG



While sustainable tourism explicitly features in SDGs 8, 12 and 14, the research has found that CSR activities in the tourism sector relate most to SDGs 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 1 (No Poverty), and 4 (Quality Education), as shown in figure 2.4. The contribution to the remaining SDGs is less visible. It can be argued that the strong connection with SDG 1 is due to the principles of non-discrimination, human rights and poverty alleviation, which have long been fundamental CSR elements in many industries. Companies consistently implement activities related to SDG 4, given that training and education are important aspects of human capital development. SDG 12 has the most related activities in all tourism industries, primarily through supplier involvement and waste management activities.

Corporate reporting on CSR and SDGs is intrinsically linked with the risks and externalities specific to the respective industry. For example, tour operators report on SDG 12 as they manage a large number of suppliers and customers. In their matching function, they are well placed to liaise between customers and providers, and as such can support their contributions to the SDGs. Both hotel and transportation companies tend to focus on SDGs 1, 4, 8 and 12 due to in-kind donations for health and education, staff training as well as energy and pollution reduction. These are major cost factors in their business models and any increase in efficiencies can have significant impacts on the bottom line.

While the initial findings show that the tourism private sector is already contributing to the achievement of the SDGs, policymakers can further enhance its role by providing clear policy frameworks, ensuring that minimum standards are implemented across the sector and promoting incentives for action.

3. SDGs in development cooperation: what role can tourism play?

The success of the SDGs will depend, to a large extent, on adequate means of implementation. This requires overcoming capacity gaps and expanding access to commercial finance. In 2016, net ODA flows from members

of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC)¹⁶ reached a new peak at USD 142.6 billion, which represents an increase of 8.9% in real terms compared to 2015¹⁷.¹⁷ Despite this progress, bilateral aid to the least developed countries (LDCs) fell by 3.9% while aid to Africa fell 0.5%.¹⁸

Tourism has proved to be an effective means of lifting countries out of extreme poverty, helping them to graduate from LDC status. Yet, in order to unlock the potential of tourism to achieve the SDGs, resources need to be mobilized and be better allocated. Even though the sector contributes significantly to the world economy and development, it has historically received very little international assistance. While ODA spent on the tourism sector remains very low, it has risen steadily over the past 15 years, reaching 0.14% of total bilateral ODA between 2011–15 (see figure 3.1). Yet, since tourism is still largely underrepresented in international aid flows, it deserves more accurate attention from the donor community.

Figure 3.1 Five-year Averages of Bilateral ODA for Tourism¹⁹

	2001–05	2006–10	2011–15
Average annual bilateral ODA for tourism (USD millions)	29	73	125
% of total bilateral ODA specified by sector	0.06%	0.10%	0.14%

Among the 22 VNRs of 2016, seven were submitted by members of the DAC, namely Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland. Only **Germany and Estonia mentioned tourism as part of their development cooperation efforts, while Switzerland provides strong indications to focus on Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) which can relate to tourism.** Germany — in advancing its global responsibility towards achieving SDG 8 — promotes the diversification of value chains in the tourism sector to integrate new, local products and services of local culture. Estonia stated that during 2016–2020 it aims to contribute more to small enterprises, the agricultural sector of the partner countries, developing tourism, creating start-ups and favouring their development.

The alignment of development cooperation with the SDGs offers important opportunities for financing sustainable and inclusive tourism. Tourism policymakers, particularly in donor countries, can play an important role in encouraging their respective departments for development cooperation to stimulate ODA and Aid for Trade (AfT), including investment in tourism for developing countries.

Innovative financing for tourism and the SDGs

While ODA continues to be a vital factor for sustainable development as well as for tourism, it has hitherto been insufficient. Hence, financial support must go beyond traditional development cooperation and leverage multiple sources of funding. Being among the world's largest economic sectors, tourism is deeply linked with global investment flows, with a 4–5% share of global investment and a dominant share in Small Island states. The sector looks at a projected investment budget in the range of EUR 2 trillion in Europe and USD 3.6 trillion in the Americas from 2015–2025, while faster growth is expected in the economies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), where 10% of investment dollars are expected to land.²⁰ Again, Africa and the poorest developing countries come in last, calling for increased cooperation among different players.

Investments in the tourism sector have traditionally resulted in expanded capacity, working capital for maintaining and upgrading infrastructure, and additional demand. However, the link between investment and the SDGs can

¹⁶ The following countries are currently members of the DAC: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

¹⁷ OECD (2017) Development aid rises again in 2016. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/ODA-2016-detailed-summary.pdf> (25-07-2017).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Source: UNWTO/IRRM, based on OECD-DAC statistics.

²⁰ WTTC regional reports, available at www.wttc.org/research/policy-research/trade-and-investment (30-07-2017).

be seen through new lenses: innovative sources of finance — private and domestic — can not only support the industry overcoming financial barriers, but also enhance its contribution towards the SDGs. This can be accomplished through direct financing, economic incentives, and facilities that blend public and private resources. These initiatives may also address the long-lasting issue of tourism concentration, since investment across all regions continues to be dominated by a few destinations and large enterprises.

The growth of sustainable and responsible investment is a new trend where new markets have emerged: green bonds are expected to pass the USD 200 billion threshold while impact investment, in which investors seek financial returns along with measurable social and environmental outcomes, is growing at double digits. Moreover, equity-based crowd investing is growing in triple digits. These investment opportunities, however, need to be matched with impactful projects in the sector.

Investment can be mobilized domestically from public and private sources, but it also needs to protect assets, such as natural and cultural landscapes, while adequately pricing long-term economic values. Various financing solutions exist to influence investor behaviour and support change in tourism enterprises, while different strategies can be adopted to both expand access to financing for the sector in developing countries as well as to drive the achievement of the SDGs.

Strengthening Partnerships for Development (SDG 17): The ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative

China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ (OBOR) initiative seeks to transform the ancient Silk Road — comprising a land route (Belt) and maritime route (Road) — into a 21st Century development scheme that aims to foster inclusive growth and stimulate trade on a grand scale. The initiative’s objectives are likely to generate a strong ripple effect in the whole region and beyond as it impacts several economic sectors, calling for economic diversification and inclusive growth.

OBOR can contribute to the achievement of various SDGs, including SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and serves as a prime example for advancing SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Opportunities include increased cultural exchange, enhanced policy coordination, cross-border investment, infrastructure development, enhanced trade and tourism, financial integration and greater connectivity along the Belt and Road, creating benefits for many developing and emerging economies in the region and the world.

Tourism can play an important role in the OBOR given China’s commitment to make tourism an important component thereof. The expected investment in infrastructure and connectivity, as well as the revitalized cross-border cooperation, can help tourism to flourish in the region and beyond. The initiative can also bring a new impetus to the development of Silk Road tourism.

4. Preliminary conclusions and recommendations

Tourism can advance all 17 SDGs, but needs coherent dialogue amongst stakeholders

There is a great opportunity to further capitalize on the value of tourism to advance all 17 SDGs, as well as to effectively communicate tourism’s strengths. Tourism’s challenges, and its vulnerability to external threats, can be addressed through effective policy, adequate frameworks and regulations that enable tourism stakeholders to respond and adapt accordingly. Given the integrated nature of the SDGs, as well the cross-cutting features of tourism, effective national coordination and cooperation between all ministries within governments is vital and should be facilitated through well-defined structures and processes. At the same time, public-private partnerships and the involvement of other stakeholders in decision-making at all spatial levels shall help to address all SDGs through tourism.

The initial research on the 22 VNRs has found that SDGs 8, 9, 12, 14 and 17 are all mentioned as opportunities for tourism to be both contributor and beneficiary. It suggests that tourism is widely recognised to positively impact on economic growth and employment; industry, innovation and infrastructure; responsible consumption and production; conservation of the marine environment; and partnerships for development. The main challenges

of tourism referred to issues covered in SDGs 5, 8, 12, 13, 14 and 15, which suggests that there are still underlying difficulties associated with gender equality, economic growth and employment, consumption and production, climate change, and marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Similarly, threats to tourism were related to SDGs 13 and 15, namely climate change and terrestrial ecosystems, respectively.

Public Policy Recommendations:

- **Ensure the participation of tourism policymakers and other relevant tourism stakeholders in the design and planning of activities related to the integration of SDGs in national strategies.** Tourism indicators in SDGs 8, 12 and 14 need to be monitored. In this respect, policymakers should actively engage with the UNWTO initiative *Measuring Sustainable Tourism*²¹ (MST).
- **Promote the inclusion of tourism policymakers and other relevant tourism stakeholders in existing national inter-ministerial SDG commissions** and/or working groups.
- **Develop research** on tourism's contribution and commitment to the SDGs.
- **Engage with the 10-YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme**²², which was launched in 2014 to advance SDG 12, and is co-led by UNWTO, the Republic of Korea, France and Morocco. Countries are invited to participate and enhance sustainable consumption and production patterns through this broad decennial framework.

Competitiveness is the key business driver of sustainability

The Agenda 2030 presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to move the convergence of intent from private and public actors towards sustainability and inclusive growth. The private sector can lead tourism towards a more sustainable path by embracing sustainable models and practices that do not undermine profitability, but on the contrary, make business sense. SDG-oriented activities among companies can help to better manage risks (e.g. climate change and community relations) and increase business efficiency (e.g. renewable energy and energy efficiency). CSR activities were found to report primarily on SDGs 12, 1 and 4 on sustainable consumption and production, poverty reduction, and education, respectively. In addition, the focus on CSR activities that relate to sustainable business operation has also shown to contribute to building competitive advantage. Yet, the effectiveness of the tourism private sector in advancing the SDGs depends on an enabling and supportive environment. Tourism policymakers can create this enabling environment.

Private Sector Recommendations:

- **Conduct awareness-raising activities and generate knowledge** amongst private sector companies on tourism's current and potential contribution to the SDGs.
- **Develop guidance material regarding the SDGs' impact** on the sector's daily business, making the SDGs more tangible for the private sector.
- **Establish stronger partnership mechanisms between the private and the public sector** in destinations to accelerate the uptake of SDGs at the destination levels.
- **Develop a toolkit and platform for businesses** to evaluate and share their own business case for sustainability on how contributing to the SDGs can be a beneficial goal and not an operational burden.²³

Innovative financing for tourism development should go beyond ODA, including private sources

While access to financing in the tourism sector is still a major obstacle, further resources will need to be mobilized for tourism to fully unleash its potential with regard to the SDGs. ODA and AfT flows allocated to tourism are not sufficient in that respect and need to be scaled up. However, while traditional development cooperation remains

²¹ Measuring Sustainable Tourism, available at: <http://statistics.unwto.org/mst> (27-07-2017).

²² 10-YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme, available at: <http://sdt.unwto.org/about-10yfp-stp> (23-07-2017).

²³ The joint project of UNWTO and the Global Compact Network Spain provides an overview of good practices that tourism companies from Spain are implementing in regard to the SDGs. Available at: <http://www.turismoyods.org/en/> (29-07-2017).

central for the poorest and most vulnerable countries, innovative financing mechanisms can play an increasingly important role in the industry. Various financing solutions — including green bonds, impact investment, energy efficiency loan facilities, blended finance, smart incentives for eco-certification, voluntary contributions, etc. — are all viable means to mobilize and blend public and private resources in a way that align investments with the SDGs. Yet, not only developing countries but also developed countries need to step up their efforts in securing resources for SDG implementation. The European Union, as well as other developed countries, are already working on aligning their support with the SDGs.

Development Cooperation Recommendations:

- **Create financing facilities for tourism and the SDGs:** well-tailored financial products can be designed and matched to particular types of SDG-related projects in the tourism sector, such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, water use, HIV and health, etc.
- **Establish smart subsidies and policies** to influence the behaviour of tourism enterprises and financiers. Examples include the inclusion of sustainability provisions for tourism concessions auctioned by the state; tradable rights for environmental compensation; water, carbon and financial incentives in the form of tax deductions for eco-certification.
- **Design public-private partnerships** for the joint provision of certain tourism facilities and services, such as transport infrastructure, public amenities or information services. Financing flows can be directed both ways. Tourism enterprises can benefit from community and public investment as well as invest in local conservation and social projects.