Final Sprint to a Global Standard on Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism

Marbella, Spain, 20 September 2023 - In line with its commitment to promoting tourism as a catalyst for economic growth, inclusive development, and environmental sustainability, UNWTO is garnering consensus around the Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainability of Tourism (MST).

The fourth meeting of the Expert Group for MST took place in Marbella - with the collaboration of the Consejería de Turismo, Cultura y Deporte de la Junta de Andalucía, co-financed with European Funds - to consolidate technical progress and articulate governance ambition.

UNWTO Executive Director, Zoritsa Urosevic, said “Andalusia is known for its openness, collaboration and innovation, quite a fitting symbol for this meeting and for our MST endeavour”.

The relevance of measurement for sustainability

MST seeks to establish an internationally recognized reference framework for measuring the economic, social and environmental impacts and dependencies of tourism. Consequently, countries will gain access to reliable and internationally comparable data at both national and subnational levels. This ensures that sustainable initiatives adopt a unified approach and yield a lasting and meaningful impact.

Securing international recognition

UNWTO has followed a UN process that will culminate in the presentation of the Statistical Framework for MST to the United Nations Statistical Commission. The goal is to secure endorsement and thereby elevate it to the status of third statistical standard for tourism.

The framework has undergone numerous consultations, has been fed by the work of nine research teams and over 21 discussion papers, as well as close technical guidance of the MST Editorial Board.
The 4th meeting of the expert group

The meeting convened representatives from Ministries, Statistical Institutes, subnational authorities, academia, and the private sector. This momentum will see the agreed Framework undergo global consultation and presentation to the UNWTO Statistics Committee and the UNWTO General Assembly for endorsement.

The successful conclusion of this journey owes much to the valuable efforts and collaboration of 44 countries plus over 30 international organizations, academic institutions, and regional tourism authorities. To date, 28 MST pilots have demonstrated the policy relevance and technical feasibility of the Framework, which is flexible to adapt to different country situations and policy priorities.

MST fills a critical gap in tourism data by offering a consensus and guidance for generating data on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of tourism's sustainability. Now, more than ever, governments, businesses and citizens require reliable and standardized data to assess performance, communicate progress, inspire the right policies and more innovative business models, and to ensure that tourism action on the ground contributes to achieving a more sustainable development.

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The 4th meeting of the expert group

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