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Items for decision: tourism statistics

Report of the World Tourism Organization on tourism statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2023/325 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the World Tourism Organization on tourism statistics, which is submitted to the Commission for decision.

* E/CN.3/2024/1.



Report of the World Tourism Organization on tourism statistics

I. Introduction

1. The Statistical Commission, at its forty-eighth session, held from 7 to 10 March 2017, adopted decision 48/115 (see [E/2017/24-E/CN.3/2017/35](#)), in which it:

(a) Expressed its appreciation for the report of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and acknowledged the country support provided by UNWTO in that area;

(b) Supported the development of the statistical framework for measuring sustainable tourism by the UNWTO working group of experts on measuring sustainable tourism, which would include the development of indicators for sustainable tourism, measurement at the subnational level and pilot projects, and noted the interest of a number of countries in participating in those pilot projects;

(c) Agreed with the proposal to prepare a compilation guide for the Tourism Satellite Account under the supervision of the Committee on Statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account of UNWTO;

(d) Agreed with the proposal to prepare a technical note linking the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Tourism Satellite Account under the auspices of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, the Committee on Statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account;

(e) Stressed the need for capacity-building for measuring sustainable tourism and, in particular, for compiling the Tourism Satellite Account and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, taking into account the constraints and challenges of the statistical systems in developing countries.

2. Since 2017, UNWTO has been reporting regularly to the Statistical Commission on progress in measuring the sustainability of tourism through the reports of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and associated background documents under the agenda item on environmental-economic accounting. Over the years, the Commission has taken the following related decisions:

(a) At its forty-ninth session, the Commission requested the Committee of Experts to advance the work on linking the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting to Tourism Satellite Accounts in support of the measurement of sustainable tourism (decision 49/110);

(b) At its fiftieth session, the Commission welcomed the technical note on linking the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Tourism Satellite Accounts prepared by UNWTO, in collaboration with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, under the auspices of the Committee of Experts and the Committee on Statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account, and requested UNWTO to continue to work on the development of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism, with the objective of submitting the framework to the Commission for its endorsement in 2020 (decision 50/115);

(c) At its fifty-first session, the Commission commended UNWTO on the work done so far on the development of a statistical framework for measuring sustainable tourism, which integrated the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Tourism Satellite Account, acknowledged the continuing progress

made through country pilots and encouraged finalization of the document in the near future (decision 51/110);

(d) At its fifty-second session, the Commission welcomed the update provided on the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism and, noting the interest from countries in that work, agreed to the finalization process for the document, including a review by the Committee of Experts prior to final consideration by the Committee on Statistics for its subsequent presentation to the Commission (decision 52/108);

(e) At its fifty-third session, the Commission encouraged the finalization of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism for future submission to the Commission and noted the strong interest from countries in that work (decision 53/115);

(f) At its fifty-fourth session, the Commission noted the update provided on the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism, encouraged the finalization of the document and welcomed its future submission to the Commission (decision 54/110).

3. The present report contains a discussion of the progress made since the report submitted by UNWTO to the Statistical Commission in 2017 (E/CN.3/2017/17), the activities carried out in response to the Commission's decisions and next steps. The report is structured around the three main pillars of work of UNWTO on tourism statistics: (a) development of internationally agreed frameworks, with a special focus on measuring the sustainability of tourism; (b) capacity development activities; and (c) compilation and dissemination of country data through the tourism statistics database. Key discussion items are presented in section V.

II. Measuring the sustainability of tourism

A. Background

4. According to the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008, adopted by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-ninth session, held from 26 to 29 February 2008, "tourism has an impact on the economy, the natural and built environment, the local population at the places visited and the visitors themselves. Owing to this range of impacts and the wide spectrum of stakeholders involved, there is a need for a holistic approach to tourism development, management and monitoring. This approach is supported by [UNWTO] in order to formulate and implement national and local tourism policies".

5. In the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008, it is also recommended that "linking tourism and sustainability be considered a priority" and that "any measurement of tourism and its effect on an economy must take into account the social, economic and environmental impacts. Links with the latter component should be a high priority".

Closing the gap between tourism policy needs and tourism statistics

6. Tourism stakeholders have been concerned about the sustainability of the sector for decades. A polluted beach or a congested city centre are unlikely to be competitive destinations, so it is clearly in the interest of the sector to sustain the basis for its prosperity. In tourism and elsewhere, there is increasing interest in how tourism supports or deters efforts to achieve sustainable development more broadly, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, tourism faced its worst crisis in history, and global

gross domestic product (GDP) from tourism nearly halved, from 4.2 per cent in 2019 to 2.3 per cent in 2020, with businesses, jobs and livelihoods severely affected. In addition to the General Assembly resolutions on the promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection,¹ the President of the Assembly convened a high-level thematic debate in 2022 on the theme “Putting sustainable and resilient tourism at the heart of an inclusive recovery”, in close collaboration with UNWTO, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

7. More than ever, there is a clearly articulated need for better data to address these and other challenges such as climate change, geopolitical instability and economic uncertainty. However, current statistics and data on tourism – and the scope of the existing internationally agreed statistical frameworks that underpin such data – primarily have a economic focus. Consequently, there is a need to expand the scope of tourism statistics to encompass social and environmental dimensions, while also rethinking the economic measurement of tourism through the lens of sustainability.

8. Recognizing these needs, the Committee on Statistics, at its sixteenth meeting on 26 and 27 January 2016, launched a programme of work on measuring the sustainability of tourism that considered the economic, environmental and social dimensions and the relevant spatial levels (global, national and subnational), in partnership with leading countries and with the support of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Labour Organization (ILO), Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), among others.

9. Measuring the sustainability of tourism comprises five interrelated lines of work:

(a) Development of the technical content of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism;

(b) Engagement and consensus-building across statistical and tourism communities with a view to presenting the statistical framework to the Statistical Commission for its endorsement;

(c) Support for piloting and implementing the statistical framework in countries;

(d) Development of a set of indicators derived from the statistical framework for international comparability purposes;

(e) Setting up of a global data set and country data reporting processes.

10. UNWTO governing bodies have called for and strongly supported the development of measuring the sustainability of tourism in recent years through various decisions of its Executive Council and resolutions of its General Assembly. Pursuant to resolutions adopted in 2017² and 2019,³ the UNWTO General Assembly, at its twenty-fourth session, held in Madrid from 30 November to 3 December 2021, reiterated the crucial policy need for measuring the sustainability of tourism and supported the efforts of the Committee on Statistics and the working group of experts

¹ General Assembly resolutions 73/245, 75/229 and 77/178.

² World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), General Assembly, resolutions adopted by the Assembly at its twenty-second session, Chengdu, China, September 2017. Available at https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-01/a22_resolutions_en.pdf.

³ UNWTO, General Assembly, resolutions adopted by the Assembly at its twenty-third session, Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, September 2019. Available at https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2019-10/a23_resolutions_en.pdf.

on measuring the sustainability of tourism to finalize the much-needed statistical framework on measuring the sustainability of tourism.⁴

11. The extraordinary meeting of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics,⁵ held on 16 October 2023 in the margins of the UNWTO General Assembly, featured a high-level panel on the theme “A 360 data approach to empower tourism”. The Ministers for Tourism of Costa Rica and Seychelles, the State Secretary of Tourism of Spain, the Undersecretary of Tourism of Chile, the Undersecretary of Tourism Development of the Philippines, the President of the Hellenic Statistical Authority and tourism leaders from Austria, Jamaica, Switzerland and other countries expressed their support for and reflected on the relevance of measuring the sustainability of tourism. The Committee⁶ unanimously agreed that the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism was ready for global consensus.

12. Subsequently, the UNWTO General Assembly, at its twenty-fifth session, held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on 18 and 19 October 2023, unanimously issued resolution 756 (XXV), in which it:

(a) Adopted the nearly finalized statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism with a view to presenting it to the Statistical Commission for its endorsement,⁷ marking a historic consensus on the statistical framework by the tourism community;

(b) Encouraged the States members of UNWTO to gradually implement the statistical framework and thereby move towards more credible and comparable data on the environmental, social and economic aspects of tourism in order to guide the sustainable development of tourism.

13. The development of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism was led by the expert group on measuring the sustainability of tourism (see paras. 19–25), under the auspices of the Committee on Statistics (co-chaired by Statistics Austria and the Ministry of Industry and Tourism of Spain) and in coordination with the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting. It benefited from wide engagement and a transparent, consultative and consensus-building process. With the support of an editorial board and several research teams, the expert group took into account the experiences of numerous pilots and comments from various rounds of consultation. Measuring the sustainability of tourism has been discussed in high-level forums, including a dedicated international conference with over 1,500 participants. It has also been recognized in high-level policy frameworks and by relevant bodies, as described below. The statistical

⁴ UNWTO, General Assembly, resolutions adopted by the Assembly at its twenty-fourth session, Madrid, November–December 2021. Available at https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-12/A24_Resolutions_En_8.pdf?VersionId=ty8QQroHUzrFT0a9F2uytuuzpxXJ4fqD.

⁵ See www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/unwto-committee-on-statistics/extraordinary_meeting.

⁶ The terms of reference of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics are available at www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/unwto-committee-on-statistics. The composition of the Committee is as follows: for the 2015–2019 period, Austria (Co-Chair), Brazil, Chile, France, Georgia (Vice-Chair), India, Mozambique, Peru, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Spain (Co-Chair); for the 2019–2023 period, Austria (Co-Chair), Brazil, France, Jamaica, Morocco, Nepal, Paraguay, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Saudi Arabia (Co-Vice-Chair), Seychelles (Co-Vice-Chair) and Spain (Co-Chair); and for the 2023–2027 period, Austria, Brazil, Costa Rica, France, Honduras, India, Morocco, Philippines, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles and Spain. The Board (Chair and Vice-Chair) will be elected in 2024.

⁷ UNWTO, General Assembly, resolutions adopted by the General at its twenty-fifth session, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, October 2023. Available at https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-11/A25_Resolutions_En.pdf?VersionId=W.me7q8oT_ZOIS.c5EAP76b3na_He7qF.

framework is submitted to the Statistical Commission as a background document to the present report.

B. Development of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism

Content and structure of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism

14. The statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism provides a multipurpose and integrated framework to describe the main concepts, definitions and data organization structures to guide the production of data on the economic, social and environmental sustainability of tourism at the global, national and subnational levels. It is aimed at supporting efforts to produce data that are comparable, integrated and credible in order to better guide decisions and policy with respect to sustainable tourism, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. The development of the statistical framework builds on and is coherent with other well-established statistical frameworks such as the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008, the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, the System of National Accounts and ILO statistical manuals.

16. The statistical framework covers the main measurement themes relevant to tourism policy and decision-making, providing a menu that enables the selection of such themes in line with country priorities and circumstances. This, in turn, helps to focus efforts on developing the data that matter most and taking advantage of available data sources and statistical infrastructure. As such, the statistical framework can be implemented in a flexible, modular and incremental fashion.

17. The statistical framework is structured in six chapters. After the introduction (chap. 1), chapter 2 provides a comprehensive description of the key features of the statistical framework, including its conceptual design, statistical foundations, approach to measurement at the subnational level and main measurement themes and indicative indicators. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 contain descriptions of the relevant concepts, definitions, measurement boundaries, statistical outputs (including accounts and tables) and measurement issues for the economic, environmental and social dimensions of tourism. Chapter 6 provides a general introduction to a range of implementation and compilation topics as well as a research agenda.

18. An important feature of the statistical framework is linking the Tourism Satellite Account and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. A technical note on linking them⁸ was developed by UNWTO in collaboration with the Statistics Division, under the auspices of the Committee on Statistics and the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting. The Statistical Commission, at its fiftieth session, welcomed the final version of the technical note (see [E/2019/24-E/CN.3/2019/34](#)), the content of which has been incorporated and further developed and refined in the chapter on measuring the environmental dimension.

Expert group on measuring the sustainability of tourism

19. Following the work programme presented to the Statistical Commission, engagement with various stakeholders has taken place, notably through the expert group on measuring the sustainability of tourism,⁹ which is chaired by Statistics

⁸ UNWTO, "Linking the TSA and the SEEA: a technical note", 2019.

⁹ See www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/expert-group-on-mst.

Austria. The expert group comprises representatives of national statistical offices and ministries in charge of tourism in around 40 countries covering all world regions, as well as representatives of over 30 international and regional organizations, subnational authorities, academic institutions and the private sector. These include the national statistical offices of Australia, Austria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Costa Rica, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland; the ministries in charge of tourism of Argentina, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Jamaica, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and the United States of America; international and regional organizations such as the Caribbean Development Bank, the European Commission, the European Travel Commission, Eurostat, ILO, OECD, the Pacific Tourism Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Statistics Division and UNWTO; ministries of the environment; and others institutions such as Auckland University of Technology, Cairo University, Cardiff Business School, Harvard University, Leuphana University, Minia University, Modul University Vienna, the University of the Aegean, the University of La Laguna, the University of Oxford, the University of Piraeus, the European Trade Association for Tour Operators, the regional Government of Andalusia and sustainable tourism observatories.

20. The multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder expert group brought together a range of statistical expertise from different domains, including tourism statistics and accounting, environment statistics and accounting, national accounts, employment statistics, social statistics and geospatial and regional statistics. The expert group supported the development of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism in a transparent way, ensuring that it is a worldwide undertaking. Collectively, it contributed to and deliberated on 21 discussion papers, discussed measurement issues and provided technical advice on the different chapters, comprehensively revised the 12 versions of the draft statistical framework and met in person on four occasions to discuss the document and its process.

21. An editorial board was established under the umbrella of the expert group to provide technical guidance on the drafting of the statistical framework on measuring the sustainability of tourism. The mandate of the editorial board was to: (a) review the papers prepared by the various research teams working on conceptual issues; (b) review the comments received through various rounds of consultation; (c) review the draft statistical framework before its submission for global consultation; (d) ensure that the comments received were taken into account; and (e) strive for consensus on solutions to the issues identified. The editorial board was chaired by the Philippine Statistics Authority from 2018 to 2022 and by Destination Canada since 2023, thereby bridging the statistical expertise of national statistical offices and tourism policy. The editorial board is composed of an editor and experts on tourism statistics, the Tourism Satellite Account, national accounts and environmental-economic accounting from Austria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Mexico, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Eurostat, ILO, the Statistics Division and UNWTO.

22. Nine dedicated research teams specialized in specific topics related to measuring the sustainability of tourism were established to develop and resolve key conceptual issues. The first research teams, set up in 2019, worked on the tourism indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals, tourism employment, the social dimension of tourism, implementation and subnational measurement. Other research teams, established in 2023, worked on the attribution of environmental flows to tourism, measurement of the social dimension, delineation of subnational spatial

areas and tourism occupations. Across the nine teams, a total of 67 experts were engaged from all regions of the world.

23. Throughout the process of measuring the sustainability of tourism, regular reporting, consultation and coordination was established through the meetings of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and its System of Environmental-Economic Accounting technical committees, the London Group on Environmental Accounting, the OECD Tourism Committee and its working party on tourism statistics and the Eurostat working group on tourism statistics.

24. The expert group has been actively supported by the Committee on Statistics, which has closely guided the development of measuring the sustainability of tourism, providing valuable strategic direction and expert contributions to the drafting of the statistical framework.

25. At its fourth meeting,¹⁰ held on 19 and 20 September 2023, the expert group considered the statistical framework on measuring the sustainability of tourism to be ready for global consultation and encouraged the Committee on Statistics to present the nearly finalized framework to the UNWTO General Assembly in October 2023 for its endorsement (see para. 12).

Engagement and consensus-building

26. At the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission, held on 8 March 2017, UNWTO and the Statistics Division hosted a seminar on the theme “Accounting and statistics for sustainable tourism”,¹¹ which showcased the experiences of Austria, Canada, Fiji and the Philippines on measuring sustainability in tourism, including the compilation of the Tourism Satellite Account and linking it with the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting.

27. Measuring the sustainability of tourism was the overall theme of the sixth International Conference on Tourism Statistics,¹² held in Manila in June 2017, which was considered a historic milestone for tourism statistics. There were over 1,500 participants, including ministers, chief statisticians, key experts and decision makers from international organizations, subnational tourism management entities, the private sector and civil society globally, to set the road map for the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism. It was the first time that a UNWTO event had brought together ministers, statistical chiefs, policy experts, statisticians, businesses and academics dedicated to the sustainable development of tourism and its measurement. At the Conference, the first draft of the statistical framework was endorsed.

28. The Conference concluded with the adoption of the Manila Call for Action on Measuring Sustainable Tourism,¹³ a global commitment to develop a consistent statistical approach to measuring the broader impacts and dependencies of tourism on the economy, the environment and society. The parties to the Manila Call recognized that developing and implementing a statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism was the critical next step in understanding, analysing and supporting universal, cross-sectoral, sustainable tourism policies and practices from an integrated, coherent and robust information base, welcomed the preliminary draft

¹⁰ See www.unwto.org/events/meeting-of-the-expert-group-on-measuring-the-sustainability-of-tourism.

¹¹ See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/48th-session/side-events/20170308-2L-accounting-and-statistics-for-sustainable-tourism>.

¹² See www.unwto.org/archive/asia/event/6th-international-conference-tourism-statistics-measuring-sustainable-tourism.

¹³ See https://webunwto.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/imported_images/47298/call_for_action_filipinas.pdf.

of the statistical framework as a launch pad to further the global discussion and appreciated the significant progress achieved through pilot studies and other relevant work at the international, national and subnational levels, which reaffirmed the conviction that the statistical framework was not only highly relevant but also feasible.

29. Measuring the sustainability of tourism was the focus of the UNWTO regional webinar for the Middle East on the theme “The deep impact of COVID-19 on tourism from a statistical perspective”,¹⁴ held on 24 August 2020. High-level experts discussed the impacts of the pandemic on tourism and the increased need to measure the different aspects of sustainability to assess the impact of crises.

30. At the high-level discussion on measuring the sustainability of tourism,¹⁵ a side event held in the margins of the fifty-second session of the Statistical Commission on 12 March 2021, heads of national statistical offices, ministries of tourism and the private sector from all world regions discussed the need for measuring the sustainability of tourism in all its dimensions – economic, social and environmental – and presented experiences in implementing the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism. The session was chaired by the Chair of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, from the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

31. The session entitled “An integrated framework for measuring sustainability: the case of tourism”,¹⁶ organized by UNWTO at the sixty-third World Statistics Congress of the International Statistical Institute, held virtually on 15 July 2021, brought together officials from national statistical offices and tourism administrations to share experiences in implementing the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism.

32. At the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, a side event entitled “Economic, social and environmental sustainability in tourism”, held in New York on 14 July 2023, featured measuring the sustainability of tourism as a main topic. It was organized by Croatia in collaboration with UNWTO and with the support of India as Chair of the Group of 20 Tourism Working Group during its presidency of the Group of 20. On this occasion, the President of the General Assembly stated that the UNWTO framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism would offer more data and better insight into the challenges for which solutions were being sought.

33. Various other policy mechanisms have recognized the relevance of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism, including:

(a) Alula Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism,¹⁷ adopted by the Group of 20 (2020);

(b) European Parliament resolution on establishing a strategy for sustainable tourism (2021);¹⁸

¹⁴ See www.unwto.org/event/the-deep-impact-of-covid-19-on-tourism-from-a-statistical-perspective.

¹⁵ See www.unwto.org/event/high-level-discussion-on-measuring-the-sustainability-of-tourism.

¹⁶ See www.unwto.org/events/world-statistics-congress-2021.

¹⁷ UNWTO, *Alula Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism* (Madrid, 2020).

¹⁸ See www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0109_EN.html.

(c) Pacific 2023 Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework,¹⁹ which includes a statistical strategy based on measuring the sustainability of tourism currently being implemented in the region (2021);

(d) United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination report entitled “Valuing what counts: United Nations system-wide contribution on progress beyond gross domestic product (GDP)” (2022);²⁰

(e) Goa road map for tourism as a vehicle for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,²¹ adopted by the Group of 20 (2023);

(f) Palma declaration, entitled “The path towards social sustainability of tourism in the European Union”,²² adopted by the European Union (2023).

Global consultation

34. An open, transparent and inclusive approach to gathering comments and feedback on the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism has been adopted. A global consultation on the final draft of the statistical framework was conducted in October and November 2023, directed at both the statistical community and the tourism community. The Statistics Division and the chief statisticians of Austria and Spain, representing their countries as Co-Chairs of the Committee on Statistics, invited the heads of national statistical offices and the chief statisticians of international organizations to participate in the global consultation. The UNWTO Secretary-General, together with the Minister of Labour and Economy of Austria and the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Tourism of Spain, also representing their countries as Co-Chairs of the Committee on Statistics, addressed the invitation to the global consultation to ministries in charge of tourism.

35. The global consultation resulted in widespread endorsement of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism, in terms of both its measurement ambition and technical content. In total, over 60 responses were received from statistical offices, ministries of tourism and international agencies. They were also received from countries in the following regions, with different levels of development, economic structure and degrees of tourism and statistical development: Africa (Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa), the Americas (Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Canada, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and United States), Asia (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Oman, Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Viet Nam), Europe (Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Ukraine) and the Pacific (Fiji and Tonga). The contributions of small island developing States and countries in Africa were generally highly supportive. Organizations such as ILO, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the Pacific Community also provided constructive and positive feedback.

36. All comments received as part of the global consultation were analysed by the editorial board and constituted a valuable basis for the finalization of the statistical

¹⁹ Pacific Tourism Organization, *Pacific 2030: Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework* (2021).

²⁰ United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, “Valuing what counts: United Nations system-wide contribution on progress beyond gross domestic product (GDP)”, August 2022.

²¹ UNWTO, *Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a Vehicle for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals* (Madrid, 2023).

²² Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, “Palma declaration: the path towards social sustainability of tourism in the EU”, Palma, Spain, 31 October 2023.

framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism. All comments are available on the global consultation website.²³ A summary of the comments and changes applied is submitted to the Statistical Commission together with the final version of the statistical framework as background documents.

Testing and capacity development

37. A total of 29 pioneering countries and subnational destinations from all regions have piloted the implementation of the statistical framework on measuring the sustainability of tourism. These included Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Egypt, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda and Viet Nam, as well as the subnational regions of Wales (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and the Canary Islands (Spain). The pilots served to test the statistical framework for policy relevance and technical feasibility, providing valuable lessons and feedback from practical experiences while supporting consensus-building. They also showed that it is possible to measure in a comparable way the breadth of elements that comprise tourism sustainability – from environmental to social and economic aspects at the national and subnational levels – within a single integrated framework. The findings of a range of pilots are available in two dedicated online publications.²⁴

38. A series of capacity development initiatives on measuring the sustainability of tourism, in the form of workshops and seminars, have taken place. These include workshops for Asia and the Pacific in 2021²⁵ and for the Philippines in 2022, an introductory workshop on women's employment data in tourism in 2022, focused on measurement challenges and solutions²⁶ with a module on measuring the sustainability of tourism, a symposium on country experiences of measuring the sustainability of tourism,²⁷ held at UNWTO headquarters in 2022, and a regional workshop on measuring tourism in Asia and the Pacific in 2023.²⁸ Dedicated sessions on measuring the sustainability of tourism have also been conducted at all tourism statistics workshops carried out by UNWTO since 2017, a complete list of which is available in section III below.

39. For transparency purposes, all information on the development of measuring the sustainability of tourism is available on the UNWTO website,²⁹ including the various versions of the draft statistical framework, comments from the different rounds of consultation, outcomes of the meetings, work of the research teams and pilots. The provision of such information recognizes the wide involvement of not only the statistical community and policy community through national statistical offices, ministries in charge of tourism and international agencies, but also the broader tourism, environmental and social sustainability communities.

²³ See www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/sf-mst-global-consultation.

²⁴ UNWTO, *Experiences from Pilot Studies in Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism: A Synopsis for Policy Makers* (Madrid, 2020); and UNWTO, *Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism: Learning from Pilots* (Madrid, 2022).

²⁵ See www.unwto.org/events/statistics-workshop-on-measuring-the-sustainability-of-tourism.

²⁶ See www.unwto.org/events/workshop-women-employment-data-tourism.

²⁷ See www.unwto.org/events/symposium-countries-exp-3rd-meeting-eg.

²⁸ See www.unwto.org/events/unwto-regional-workshop-on-measuring-tourism-in-asia-and-the-pacific.

²⁹ See www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/measuring-sustainability-tourism.

Measuring the sustainability of tourism: the way forward

40. As stated above, the programme for measuring the sustainability of tourism is a process that includes various lines of work beyond the development of the statistical framework. UNWTO will continue to work in partnership with countries and international organizations, among others, on supporting the further implementation of the statistical framework, including through the drafting of compilation guidance and capacity development, the development of a set of framework-based indicators for international comparability purposes and the subsequent setting up of an international data set with country reporting on the indicators.

41. The statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism can function as a catalyst for the development of systems of tourism statistics that include data based on the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008 and the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008. To support countries in the implementation of the statistical framework, UNWTO, under the supervision of the Committee on Statistics and with the support of the expert group on measuring the sustainability of tourism, will develop an implementation programme in 2024 that includes:

(a) Preparation of a compilation guide for the statistical framework to support implementation by providing additional guidance on data sources and methods;

(b) Organization of the seventh International Conference on Tourism Statistics, focused on implementation of the statistical framework;

(c) Capacity development activities at the regional and national levels in the form of workshops, seminars and training programmes, as well as training for trainers;

(d) Additional publications on lessons learned from the pilots for measuring the sustainability of tourism, following the two publications already issued.

42. These activities will cover technical knowledge on the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism, the exchange of good practices and institutional arrangements. The implementation programme will be accompanied by resource mobilization efforts to support the financing of planned activities.

43. At its fourth meeting, the expert group on measuring the sustainability of tourism discussed an initial proposal for a set of core indicators derived from the statistical framework for international comparability purposes,³⁰ as well as a possible way forward that includes rounds of consultation and testing in countries. In time, the core set of indicators is expected to be incorporated into the UNWTO tourism statistics database. UNWTO and the Co-Chairs of the Committee on Statistics (Austria and Spain) are also participating in the task team on sustainable tourism of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

III. Capacity development activities

A. Training and technical support

44. In addition to the capacity development activities on measuring the sustainability of tourism described above, UNWTO supports countries in their development of systems of tourism statistics through:

³⁰ UNWTO, "Proposals for a set of indicators", draft prepared for discussion at the fourth meeting of the expert group on measuring the sustainability of tourism, September 2023.

(a) Regional capacity development programmes consisting of a series of incremental workshops, with technical guidance and additional assignments in between, as well as a final regional seminar at the end of the two-to-three-year programme;

(b) Ad hoc training workshops, either regional or national;

(c) Technical support and cooperation projects aimed at developing the capacities of country officials through the provision of advisory and technical assistance.

45. During the period from 2017 to 2023, the following capacity development activities were undertaken:³¹

(a) A regional programme for capacity development in French-speaking countries in Africa, in collaboration with the Government of Algeria, was carried out between 2017 and 2023, consisting of three regional workshops covering 14 countries. To foster collaboration between the main entities involved in the production of tourism statistics, the participants were from ministries in charge of tourism, national statistical offices and central banks. Each workshop lasted several days and covered all the key elements in order to support countries in strengthening their systems of tourism statistics. The programme also included activities between workshops in line with the road map agreed during the first workshop;

(b) Regional training workshops were conducted in 2021 in Africa (on tourism statistics for countries in Africa)³² and in the Caribbean (on tourism statistics,³³ organized jointly with the Caribbean Tourism Organization) and in 2017 in Europe (on measuring the economic impact of tourism in Europe through the Tourism Satellite Account,³⁴ organized jointly with the European Commission);

(c) Technical cooperation projects were carried out in the following locations in all world regions: Angola (2021), Aruba (2014–2020), Benin (2021–2023), Botswana (2017–2018), Brunei Darussalam (2017), Cabo Verde (2019), Cameroon (2017), Costa Rica (2019), Croatia (2021–2022), Gambia (2019), Honduras (2018–2019), Malawi (2019–2022), Mexico (2018–2019), Montenegro (2022), Myanmar (2018–2021), Nepal (since 2019), Nigeria (2018), Oman (2018–2019), Peru (2020–2021), Tajikistan (2021–2022), Saudi Arabia (since 2020), Seychelles (2018–2023), Sri Lanka (since 2020), United Arab Emirates (since 2020), Uruguay (2017), Zambia (2022) and Zimbabwe (2021–2022).

B. Development of a compilation guide for the Tourism Satellite Account

46. In late 2017, UNWTO, with the support of the Statistics Division, set up the expert group on the compilation guide for the Tourism Satellite Account, composed of experts from national statistical offices, ministries in charge of tourism and international and regional organizations. Members included Austria, Canada, Czechia, Georgia, Malaysia, Mexico, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Eurostat, ILO and OECD. The expert group was tasked with drafting the compilation guide, consulting all stakeholders in the process and preparing the guide for submission to the Statistical Commission.

³¹ See www.unwto.org/statistics/capacity-development.

³² See www.unwto.org/2021_africa_ws_ts.

³³ See www.unwto.org/ws_tourism_caribbean.

³⁴ See www.unwto.org/archive/europe/event/DG_Grow_WS.

47. As a first step, the expert group collected and reviewed existing support materials, shared country practices, prepared the outline and drafted part of the text for the compilation guide.

48. At its the first meeting, held in Madrid on 25 February 2019, the expert group conducted a thorough discussion of the draft chapters and agreed on a road map for the finalization of the compilation guide. However, progress in this area has been hampered by a lack of adequate funding and now awaits the revisions of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, the Central Product Classification and the System of National Accounts to incorporate relevant changes.

C. Development of a tourism statistics guidance note in the context of COVID-19

49. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected not only the tourism sector, but also tourism statistical activities. To support countries in dealing with the unusual statistical situations that arose from the pandemic, UNWTO developed the *Conceptual Guidance on Tourism Statistics in the COVID-19 Context*.³⁵ Based on the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008, it provides further guidance on the treatment of special cases such as quarantine stays, COVID-19-related expenditure, patients and health workers, and changes in activity in tourism industries. It was based on a survey carried out among UNWTO official data providers and followed a consultation process between the Committee on Statistics, the task team on business dynamics, demography and entrepreneurship and international organizations and countries.

IV. Expansion and modernization of the tourism statistics database

50. UNWTO systematically collects tourism statistics from countries and territories around the world and compiles them in a database that provides the most comprehensive repository of statistical information available on the tourism sector. The database is updated throughout the year. It contains over 175 items of data and indicators on:

(a) Basic tourism statistics: data on inbound, outbound and domestic tourism, tourism industries, employment and macroeconomic indicators;

(b) Official Sustainable Development Goal indicators: UNWTO is custodian of two indicators in the global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and collects data on:

(i) Tourism direct GDP as a proportion of total GDP (indicator 8.9.1);

(ii) Implementation of standard accounting tools to monitor the economic and environmental aspects of tourism sustainability (indicator 12.b.1).

51. In 2022, the database was expanded, leading to the addition of key economic indicators on:

(a) Internal tourism consumption, including inbound tourism expenditure and domestic tourism expenditure;

³⁵ UNWTO, *Conceptual Guidance on Tourism Statistics in the COVID-19 Context* (Madrid, 2021).

- (b) Tourism direct gross value added;
- (c) Total gross value added of tourism industries;
- (d) Additional data and indicators on employment: number of persons employed, jobs and full-time equivalent jobs for the concepts of “tourism industries” and “direct tourism employment”.

52. Data are accessible through a dedicated website³⁶ created in 2020 to disseminate key data and their visualization through better user experience. Data continue to be made available through the UNWTO electronic library³⁷ and also feed UN Data,³⁸ the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database³⁹ and the Open Sustainable Development Goal Data Hub.⁴⁰

53. In 2023, UNWTO embarked on the modernization of its statistical database and statistical data processing to better accommodate the evolving needs of data reporters and data users. The aim is to make better use of technology with a view to gaining efficiencies, offering more timely and impactful data and enhancing the experience for both data reporters and data users. It is expected that a new upgraded version of the reporting mechanisms for countries will become operational for the 2024 round of reporting and after testing with a selection of countries.

V. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

54. **The Statistical Commission may wish:**

- (a) **To endorse the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism;**
- (b) **To express its views on the further development of the programme of work for measuring the sustainability of tourism under the auspices of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and the technical leadership of the expert group on measuring the sustainability of tourism;**
- (c) **To invite Member States and donors to support the financing of capacity development activities that promote the implementation of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism.**

³⁶ UNWTO, tourism statistics database, available at www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/tourism-statistics-database.

³⁷ See www.e-unwto.org.

³⁸ See <https://data.un.org>.

³⁹ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>.

⁴⁰ See <https://unstats-undesa.opendata.arcgis.com>.