Measuring Sustainable Tourism

Project Update

Paper prepared for UNCEEA meeting, June 2017

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Background

- 1. In 2015 the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), with the support of UNSD, initiated the Towards a Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST) project. Reports on the initial plans and objectives was presented to UNCEEA at its 2015¹ and 2016² meetings. A key motivation for the MST project is developing tourism statistics to support measurement of progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and particularly those SDG targets that relate directly to sustainable tourism.
- 2. A key output from the MST project will be a statistical framework within which a core feature is the linking of the SEEA with the existing framework for tourism satellite accounts (TSA), hence the interest for UNCEEA. This note provides an update on developments in the MST project since last year.
- 3. Overall, there has been significant progress in the MST project in the past 12 months. The project has gained high level recognition across tourism circles and it is considered a flagship project within UNWTO. This status has been reinforced through a strong connection being made to the events and engagement by UNWTO for the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017.
- 4. In statistical circles as well, the project has been widely endorsed by the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account and also especially during the discussion of tourism statistics at the March 2017 session of the UN Statistical Commission. The strong and widespread support for the project shown at that session, with 14 countries participating in the deliberations and including the support from the CARICOM and the group of African countries, was especially encouraging and reflected in the Commission's decisions³.

Key developments

Working group of experts on MST

5. Through 2016 a Working Group of Experts on MST was formed and they held their first meeting in Madrid in October 2016. There were over 50 participants from a wide range of countries, sectors and areas of expertise and the overall sense from the

¹ See: <u>https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/meetings/tenth_meeting/BK4a.pdf</u>

² See: <u>https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/meetings/eleventh_meeting/SM-11-2-a.pdf</u>

³ Decision 48/115 on Tourism statistics

meeting was one of enthusiasm for engagement and progress in this area of work. IN many respects the MST project was seen to provide a platform for connecting a wide range of existing measurement projects.

- 6. The meeting discussed eight main research papers covering a variety of aspects of the measurement challenge including initial thoughts in linking the economic and environmental dimensions of tourism activity using accounting frameworks. It was clear that taking into account spatial scale will be a key aspect in advancing the work since sustainable tourism has traditionally been conceptualised at the destination level. It was also clear that there is a considerable body of knowledge on the measurement of sustainable tourism across its economic, environmental and social dimensions. The challenge is to translate this knowledge into a statistical and accounting setting.
- 7. A report of the meeting and links to associated papers and presentations can be found online⁴.

UNWTO Committee on Tourism Statistics and TSA

- 8. The Committee on Tourism Statistics and TSA is the standing committee of the UNWTO that guides the development of tourism statistics and which has carriage of the MST project. At its meeting in January 2017, discussion of the MST project was the key agenda item. A number of papers were presented including a draft outline for the planned Statistical Framework for MST (the latest draft outline is attached in Annex 1), a draft outline for a Technical Note linking SEEA and TSA, a research agenda for the MST project and plans for the drafting of a compilation guide for TSA. The feedback from the discussion of those papers is feeding into the various drafting processes.
- 9. A key feature of the Committee meeting were the presentations on the policy uses of sustainable tourism indicators and also a range of pilot studies linking TSA and SEEA from Canada, Netherlands, Fiji, Mexico and Italy. The existence of this wide ranging experience provides a strong basis for taking this work forward.
- 10. A report of the meeting and links to associated papers and presentations can be found online⁵. A list of members of the UNWTO Committee is presented in Annex 2.

6th International Conference on Tourism Statistics: Measuring Sustainable Tourism

- 11. From 21-23 June, 2017, the Philippines will host the 6th International Conference on Tourism Statistics with MST being the overall theme for the conference⁶. These conferences are held every 5 10 years with the last conference held in Bali in 2009. It represents a significant event in global tourism statistics and for the tourism community more broadly.
- 12. This year, the focus on MST has been a catalyst for broad engagement on tourism statistics and the opening of the event will be highlighted by a Ministerial Roundtable, followed by a Roundtable of Chief Statisticians. Some 800 international and local participants are expected throughout (1500 in the opening). With the support of the Government of the Philippines, the Conference will issue a Call for Action on the

 ⁴ First Meeting of the Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism: <u>http://statistics.unwto.org/wg_meeting</u>
⁵ Seventeenth meeting of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account

http://statistics.unwto.org/committeestsa_17thmeeting

⁶ 6th International Conference on Tourism Statistics: Measuring Sustainable Tourism at <u>www.mstconference.org</u>

measurement of sustainable tourism thus providing an excellent foundation and impetus for extending statistical work in this area.

- 13. Sessions of the conference will cover user and policy needs, linking economic and environmental dimensions of tourism, measuring employment and social aspects, measurement at sub-national scales, the potential of big data and non-traditional data sources, and the role of indicators and the connection of MST to the SDG agenda. Specific papers to be presented include a preliminary draft of the statistical framework and a draft of the Technical Note Linking SEEA and TSA.
- 14. A report from the Conference and the Call for Action will be presented to the UNWTO General Assembly in September 2017.

Next steps

- 15. Responding to the Manila Call for Action and building on the discussions at the international conference, a more detailed program of work within the MST project will be elaborated. It will encompass advancements in the research agenda envisaged at the January 2017 Committee meeting and will work towards the finalisation of the Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism for presentation to the UNSC at its meeting March 2020.
- 16. With respect to environmental-economic accounting specifically, the draft Technical Note Linking SEEA and TSA will be presented at the Manila conference and subject to further consultation among the Working Group of Experts on MST. Engagement with the London Group is also planned. Clearly establishing the economy-environment linkage is a core feature of the overall MST framework and the broader framework will reflect an accounting framing for other information, for example concerning employment and social aspects of sustainable tourism.
- 17. Following these stages of external review, t is intended that an updated draft of the Technical Note be provided to the SEEA Central Framework Technical Committee in the second half of 2017 for their review and consideration. Ultimately, the Technical Note should be endorsed by the UNWTO Committee on Tourism Statistics and TSA and will be considered by that committee at their next meeting in early 2018.
- 18. It is noted also that through 2017 work will continue towards drafting of a TSA Compilation Guide, co-ordinated by UNSD, and in line with proposals presented to the January 2017 Committee meeting.
- 19. Building on the development of the conceptual materials and research program, planning will commence to extend the program of pilot studies that has already commenced and importantly, to structure a program of capacity building, implementation support and associated materials. To this end, an exciting development is the nomination of MST as a flagship program for 2018 in the UNWTO Resource Mobilisation Program. This nomination aims to secure funding to support MST developments and reflects the desire to support projects that embed sustainable tourism within the rigour of statistics , whilst building on the engagement generated through the International Year 2017 activities.
- 20. The MST project will be happy to provide a further update on progress to the next UNCEEA meeting.

Issues for decision/discussion

Members of UNCEEA are asked to:

- Note the progress and developments in the MST. Comments on the project would be welcome.
- Comment on the role of UNCEEA in relation to the development and finalisation of the Technical Note and the broader MST framework. In particular, confirm that the Technical Note will be a joint output of UNCEEA and the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA.
- Endorse the proposed approach to the finalisation of the Technical Note Linking SEEA and TSA involving the SEEA Central Framework Technical Committee as described above.

Annex 1: Draft outline MST Statistical Framework at June 2017

Following is the table of contents from the preliminary draft of the MST Statistical Framework to be presented to the International Conference on Tourism Statistics in Manila, June 2017. This outline is updated from an earlier draft outline considered by the UNWTO Committee on Tourism Statistics and TSA at their meeting in January 2017.

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Glossary References and links (to be finalized)

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Annex 2: UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA – List of members

List of participants of the 17th meeting of UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA, UNWTO Headquarters, Madrid, Spain, 24-25 January 2017

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