

Second International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism

Davos, Switzerland, 1 - 3 October 2007

TECHNICAL NOTE

Climate change and global warming have become a key area of public concern, which is supported by sound scientific reports, economic studies and increasing media coverage. For tourism climate change is not a remote event, but a phenomenon that already impacts the sector in different settings and destination, from the Polar Regions to tropical islands, mountains, coasts, arid areas, and heritage sites, among others. It has to be recognized that there is a two-way relationship between tourism and climate change, and tourism is also a contributor to the causes of climate change, mainly due to the emissions resulting from tourism transport and energy use in facilities.

Since the 1st International Conference on this topic, convened by UNWTO in Tunisia in 2003, a growing body of knowledge has been generated addressing the relationship between the tourism sector and climate change; considerable awareness has been raised in the tourism sector; and tourism has been dealt within the context of international processes and related sectoral policies. There is now a wider recognition of the urgent need for the tourism sector to adapt to the changing climate conditions and to take preventive actions for future effects, as well as to mitigate tourism's environmental impacts contributing to climate change.

Climate-related risks for tourism: the need for adaptation

Besides being an impact and risk factor, climate is also an essential resource for tourism, in general for all outdoor activities, and especially for the beach and winter sport tourism segments. Directly, climate variability and changing weather patterns can affect the planning of tourism programmes and daily operations. Changing weather patterns at tourist destination and tourism generating countries can largely affect tourist's comfort, tourists' decision for trips, and eventually the tourists' flow. Changing demand patterns and tourism flows will have impact on tourism businesses and on host communities dependent on this activity, as well as knock off effects on related sectors, such as agriculture or construction. More importantly, any significant reduction in tourist arrivals in small island states or developing countries where tourism is a major economic activity will have serious employment impacts and generate further poverty. Indirect impacts are related to the use of environmental resources, physical impacts on destinations and on tourism infrastructure, especially considering extreme climatic events. These risk factors need to be integrated into business practices and tourism planning processes, in order to adapt to the changing climatic conditions.

Tourism's contribution to the causes of climate change: the need for mitigation

While concerns about tourism's polluting effects cover all aspects of a tourist's activity, the primary issue concerning climate change factors relates the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated through travellers' consumption of transport services (notably road and air transport), and energy consumption in tourism establishments (like air conditioning, heating, lighting in hotels). In the wider area of the sustainability of tourism, tourism's high per capita consumption of water, energy efficiency, waste management issues and the effects that tourism has on flora and fauna should be considered. The tourism sector has a responsibility to minimise harmful emissions by encouraging sustainable, carbon-neutral transport solutions, improve the efficiency of the use of natural resources (water, energy), and contribute to the conservation of natural areas.

The **Second International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism** will provide a forum to bring together international organizations, public and private sector stakeholders in tourism and the academic community in order to review international processes, discuss on adaptation and mitigation needs and policy options. The event will examine the linkages between climate factors and tourism operations in their complexity draw conclusions and propose recommendations to all stakeholders involved.



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