

UNWTO Tourism and Climate Change – Overview September 2007

- UNWTO has been a specialized UN Agency since 2003, although it has existed as the global intergovernmental tourism organization for more than 50 years. It has 157 Member States and regions and more than 350 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, academia and destinations. UNWTO has regional commissions and interactive mechanisms with most parts of the tourism value chain.
- It is designated as the UN Agency with the central coordinating role in a cross cutting sector (leisure and business travel) which drives 3-5% of the economy directly. Tourism is a catalyst for many other sectors and doubles in impact every decade or so. Tourism is the main export for most poor countries and recognized as a vital component of the Development Agenda.
- Tourism is a victim and a vector of climate change:
 - It is a victim insofar as changes in temperature, sea levels, snowfields and land use will radically change tourism capabilities and hence trade and development patterns of states and communities. This is relevant for all states but particularly so for developing countries generally and Africa specifically.
 - It is a vector insofar as the tourism value chain has a defined and highly visible carbon footprint that will increase based on growth projections. Transport generally is an important factor and air transport specifically because of the current absence of clean alternative energy. Aviation is pivotal to deliver tourism exports for the world's poorest countries and small island developing states.
- UNWTO has been studying this matter for some years as part of its overall work on sustainable development. We are working closely with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). In 2003 we convened an international industry stakeholders Conference which resulted in the Djerba Declaration on Climate Change and Tourism and which contained framework guidance for public sector and private sector players.
- We have currently initiated a more in depth review against the background of climate and poverty imperatives: market trends, adaptation, mitigation, technology/science and financing. This work also undertaken with UNEP and WMO will be considered at:
 - A major sectoral Conference in Davos, October 1-3, with the Government of Switzerland, and the involvement of the World Economic Forum when the Djerba declaration will be brought up to date;
 - A Tourism Ministerial Summit in London on November 13 with the Government of UK, based on the Davos results;
 - UNWTO's General Assembly in Cartagena, November 22-29, with the Government of Colombia.
- The outcomes will be available for the UN Secretary General's Bali Conference in December 2007.