

Submission to the First UNFCCC Global Stocktake

Scaling-up Climate Action in Tourism

Summary

At COP26, the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism was launched to support transformations and to build back a more sustainable and resilient tourism sector. The Declaration offers a framework for consistent action and collaboration which is not only focused on decarbonization, but also on the transformation, adaptation, finance and regenerative actions that will help tourism respond to remain a viable and thriving economic sector in the context of a changing climate.

The Declaration brings together industry, governments and multipliers to work at sectoral level and signatories increased twofold since the launch in November 2021. UNWTO is leading the implementation of the Glasgow Declaration, which was endorsed by its Executive Council in June 2022 in [Decision CE/116](#).

Background

The tourism sector is highly vulnerable to climate change. Tourism depends on environmental resources while climate defines the length and quality of tourism seasons. At the same time, tourism contributes to the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG). Accelerating climate action in tourism is therefore of utmost importance for the resilience of the sector.

According to [UNWTO/ITF research on Transport-related CO₂ emissions from the tourism sector](#), released in December 2019 at UNFCCC COP25, CO₂ emissions from tourism were forecast to increase at least by 25% by 2030, making it difficult for the sector to stay aligned with international goals. As operations rebound after the COVID-19 crisis, scaling-up climate action in tourism remains of utmost importance. Measurement of emissions appears to be one of the main barriers to accelerate climate action given the fragmented and diverse tourism value chain which includes a variety of stakeholders such as accommodation providers, tour operators, transport, destination managers and experience providers, among others.

Tourism has been one of the hardest hit sectors by COVID-19, with international arrivals reaching 400,000 in 2021 compared to 1,4 billion in 2019. Additionally, the current energy crisis related to the war in Ukraine has disrupted the tourism business model and increased price volatility. The polycrisis are key drivers for rethinking tourism operations and transformation towards more responsible patterns – thus increasing both competitiveness and sustainability. This growing consensus of the importance to rebalance tourism with nature and to scale up climate action in tourism is starting to be reflected in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), in which the references to tourism have increased from 41% in 2019 to 46% in 2021. Among those NDCs which mention tourism, there is an increase in references to the sector's vulnerability to climate change (54%, from 21% in 2019) and a priority sector (49%, from 20% in 2019), and more references connecting the sector with adaptation (66%, from 24% in 2019) and mitigation (29%, from 8% in 2019).

However, the [UNWTO/UNEP Baseline Report on the Integration of Sustainable Consumption and Production](#) which carried out a review of over 100 national tourism policies identified that only 40% of national tourism policies acknowledge climate change as a problematic (research



from June 2019) and that only around 25% of those policies mentioned policy instruments that could lead to implementation, with a large majority of these instruments being voluntary. There appears to be a gap in terms of coordination of climate action between Ministries of Tourism and ministries in charge of climate (e.g. Ministries of Environment/Energy). In addition, policy makers within the tourism sector lack sometimes clear understanding of how they can influence climate agendas in their countries and create an effective enabling environment for the tourism sector to tackle the issue of climate change.

The findings of the [Global Survey on Climate Action in Tourism](#) which UNWTO led in collaboration with UNFCCC and with support from the Adventure Travel Trade Association and Tourism Declares, revealed an activist spirit within the sector, where a majority of the 1,139 organizations that responded (governments and businesses from 131 countries) indicated that they are taking action, even without the guidance of a plan. The sense of urgency is apparent among respondents, yet the survey confirms that most lack in-depth understanding of solutions to be implemented, and report needing additional support to take consistent action, including to measure emissions and integrate low carbon operations.

Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism

At UNFCCC COP26, the [Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#) was launched as a catalyst for increased urgency about the need to accelerate climate action in tourism and to secure strong commitments to support the global goals to halve emissions over the next decade and reach Net Zero emissions as soon as possible before 2050. The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism defines a clear and consistent sector-wide message and approach to accelerate climate action in tourism. It is aligned with the scientific framework and urgency to act now and it operates as a voluntary commitment aimed at enhancing the contribution of tourism to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Each signatory of the Glasgow Declaration commits to: Supporting the global goals of halving emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero as soon as possible before 2050; Delivering a climate action plan (or updating an existing plan) within 12 months from becoming a signatory and implementing them; Aligning their plans with five pathways: measure, decarbonize, regenerate, collaborate, finance; Report publicly on an annual basis on progress against targets and actions; Work in a collaborative spirit, share good practices and solutions, and disseminate information.

Over 700 organizations have become signatories of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism in only 9 months, since its launch in November 2021. Signatories include tourism businesses (e.g. tour operators, accommodation providers and travel agents), governments (e.g. national tourism authorities and destinations), as well as supporting organizations (e.g. NGOs, business associations, etc).

The implementation of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism is being led by UNWTO in collaboration with the Travel Foundation, and within the framework of the UNEP-led One Planet Network. The Initiative supports its signatories by sharing knowledge and resources to better implement their commitments; fostering and supporting the work at destination level to develop and implement climate action plans; tracking and disclosing progress implementing the commitments; and providing international recognition and visibility.

In 2022, priority has been given to the provision of research and guidance on emissions measurement and climate planning and resources are being produced following a participatory approach. The initiative is also in the process of being integrated within the Global Climate Action Portal of UNFCCC.