
Virtual meeting
22 June 2021
16:30 – 18:15 (CET)

Concept Note

Introduction

Tourism accounts for up to 40% and 70% of GDP in developing countries and small islands economies, respectively, and has strong linkages with other sectors that contribute to economic growth, such as agriculture, including fishing, industry and services in general. In 2019, tourism accounted for 7% of global trade and represented the third largest export category. The impact of COVID-19 on the global economy, including border closures and other restrictions on movement, has had a direct impact on the tourism sector, affecting the livelihoods of millions of people and public services on all continents.

The health and economic crises have given an opportunity to rethink how tourism can better interact with our natural resources and ecosystems, shifting towards a tourism sector that is more resilient, resource-efficient and carbon neutral. As part of the recovery from COVID-19, it is necessary to foster green investments for protected areas, renewable energy, "smart" and more ecological buildings, and the circular economy, allowing for the development of a more sustainable and inclusive tourism sector.

Today, more than ever, it is of vital importance to diversify the tourism sector and to align it closely to the Sustainable Development Goals, including interlinkages with environmental goals. Climate change is one of the many factors that affect tourism demand, especially for small island states (SIDs), which are vulnerable to rising sea levels. Hence, a global response boosted by appropriate domestic policies must be coordinated at the multilateral level, to support the millions of livelihoods that rely on tourism. This sector needs to build a new, more sustainable model to ensure a resilient and inclusive economic growth.

Given the importance of tourism in international trade, this event aims to contribute to the exchange of information between different stakeholders on how to use tourism as a recovery strategy from the COVID-19 pandemic, and how to pave the way towards greater tourism sustainability.
Objectives

The main objective of the high-level panel discussion is the knowledge exchange on 'Building Back Better in Tourism'. With the objective of a responsible recovery of tourism, the panel of experts will exchange insights on how to improve the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the tourism sector through, in particular, responsible trade and investment. Achieving sustainable tourism requires constant monitoring of impacts moving away from traditional measures to new indicators that include the environmental and social dimension in addition to the economic measurement.

Agenda

16:30 Welcome remarks by Mr. Hoe Lim, Director, Trade and Environment Division, WTO.

16:35 Introductory Address by H.E. Mr. Chad Blackman, Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva, and former Chair of the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment – Vulnerability of SIDs in the context of Global Climate Change and prescribe specific actions to enable them to achieve sustainable development, ACP Proposal, Plastics.


16:55 Moderator, Mr. Dale Honeck, Senior Counsellor, Trade in Services and Investment Division, WTO to start panel.

Panel Presentations

17:00 Presentation by Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Representative to the United Nations in Geneva – COVID-19 Crisis Management, MST.

17:10 Presentation by Ms. Constanza Olaya Cantor, Directora de Calidad y Desarrollo Sostenible del Turismo Colombia – Innovative COVID Responses, Tourism Restructuring, Colombia's new tourism plan aligned to SDGs, climate challenges and commitments to circularity and the Global Tourism Plastic Initiative.

17:20 Presentation by Dr. Sue Snyman, Director of Research, School of Wildlife Conservation, African Leadership University – SSA Responses, New Wildlife Economy Report.

17:30 Presentation by Mr. Anders Aeroe, Director, Division of Enterprises and Institutions, ITC – ITC strategy for support to sustainable and inclusive tourism development to Build Back Better.
17:40 Commentary by Mr. Dale Honeck.

Audience and Speakers

17:45 Remarks by Mr. Peter Haxton, Policy Analyst, Regional Development and Tourism Division, OECD - Report of the OECD Tourism Committee on sustainable recovery and work on the green recovery/transition of tourism. Rethinking tourism success to promote more sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

17:50 Remarks by Ms. Kim Kampel, Trade Adviser, Negotiations and Emerging Trade Issues, Commonwealth Small States Office, Geneva - Strategies to revive tourism amid the pandemic and how the crisis can be used to rebuild tourism sector to enhance its sustainability from the SIDS/small states perspective.

17:55 Remarks by Mr. Boopen Seetanah and Dr. Fauzel, co-authors of the paper "Investigating the impact of climate change on the tourism sector of SIDS" (5 minutes)
Impact of climate change on the tourism sector of small island developing states (SIDS), its relationship with the tourism demand in 20 SIDS from 1995 to 2015 and its implications in terms of GDP growth and development.

Q&A 10 minutes

18:10 Wrap-up: Mr. Dale Honeck.

Participation

The meeting is open to WTO Members, international organisations, including specialised agencies, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organisations, academia and the private sector.

Format

The event will be limited to 1 hour and 40 minutes and will be hosted on the Zoom platform. Mr. Hoe Lim will open the meeting, followed by introductory remarks delivered by H.E. Mr. Chad Blackman of Barbados and H.E. Dr. Asim Ahmed of the Maldives. Mr. Dale Honeck will then introduce the panel. The four panelists will make their presentations: Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic, Ms. Constanza Olaya Cantor, Dr. Sue Snyman, and Mr. Anders Aeroe, followed by a commentary by Mr. Dale Honeck. Afterwards, four speakers will be given the opportunity to intervene from the audience – Mr. Peter Haxton, Ms. Kim Kampel, Mr. Boopen Seetanah and Dr Fauzel.

A maximum of 10 minutes will be allocated for questions and answers from the floor. Participants may request the floor during the meeting.