



**Summary points for UNSD and UNCEEA Chair
on
the UNSD-UNWTO initiative on Measuring Tourism for Sustainable Development**

Broad motivations

- Stakeholders at all levels increasingly require information to assess the opportunities and challenges that tourism brings to sustainable development. They face questions like¹:
 - Is tourism a strain on the environment? Are there positive effects on the environment?
 - How do these compare to the economic effects of tourism? What are the trade-offs?
 - How much does tourism contribute to greenhouse gas emissions?
 - How does tourism compare to alternative uses of land?
 - How resource intense is tourism?
 - How is tourism affected by climate change? And how does it contribute to climate change?
 - Is tourism a net contributor to sustainable development?
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) leave no doubt: sustainability is at the forefront of policy. Tourism, considered in three of these Goals (Target 8.9, 12.b and 14.7), is more than ever before expected to live up to the expectations of sustainability—not only of tourism itself, but also of tourism as a contributor to sustainable development.

Objectives

- (1) Linking the SEEA to the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA). While both these sets of accounts have their corresponding methodological frameworks agreed internationally and rooted in the SNA, an explicit link—a SEEA-tourism—is necessary. The SEEA-Applications and Extensions explicitly describes the potential extension of SEEA to tourism. Both SEEA-CF and Ecosystems should be considered.

It is recognized that “sustainable tourism” (much like sustainable development) is largely a policy construct without a precise definition, and certainly not in a way that would enable measurement or comparability at this point. Development towards SEEA-tourism, and also work on the other 2 objectives below, will shed light on the kind of information, tables, and accounts that should/could be compiled in order to measure tourism in internationally comparable ways that enable considering sustainability.

- (2) Developing indicators for monitoring, including in the context of the SDGs. Following the information pyramid logic, such indicators should be rooted in the above methodological frameworks and, to the degree possible, national level indicators should be sourced from accounts of a resulting SEEA-tourism. This is also the aspiration for the indicators for the 3 tourism related SDG targets: 8.9, 12.b and 14.7.

¹ Several questions taken or adapted from Jackson, C. et al. (2008), *Linking the Canadian Tourism Satellite Account and the Canadian System of Environmental and Resources Accounts to measure the environmental impact of tourism in Canada: An exploratory study for two pilot countries*, presented to the 9th International Forum on Tourism Statistics, Paris, November 19-21, 2008.

Such national level (macroeconomic) information on tourism will serve user purposes like: global monitoring and benchmarking across countries on key policy issues, mainstreaming tourism in development agendas, awareness raising and advocacy by national tourism administrations, and for informing on trans-border or global issues such as climate change.

However, it is understood that a macroeconomic approach alone is not sufficient for advancing an understanding of “sustainable tourism”... and this leads to the third objective:

- (3) Advancing the measurement of key aspects in the relationship between tourism and sustainability—this requires consideration of also the sub-national perspective.

In the design of information that is meaningful to stakeholders, it is noted that tourism and territory (space) are narrowly intertwined not only because the natural or built space is often the main tourism attraction (e.g. an exotic beach, a vibrant city), but also because territory, and movements across it, largely condition tourism trips and itineraries, the nature of the supply that caters to visitor consumption, the capacity to modulate by means of policy and, consequently, the relationship to potential welfare.

It is increasingly recognized that stakeholders actually involved with tourism policy and management require information at the sub-national level.

Moreover, it is understood that comparability is a primary objective of tourism measurement at all spatial levels and that in order to achieve comparability (1) indicators at different levels (national macro-economic, sub-national) need to share a common conceptual framework and that (2) sub-national measurement needs to part from a statistical framework, with any deviations from it analytically supported and properly documented.

This is the focus taken by the UNWTO-launched INRouTe project on advancing the measurement and analysis of tourism at sub-national level. Its work will form the basis for future UNWTO measurement guidelines and will be an important input to this initiative. A Conference in Puerto Rico on 18-19 November will discuss the progress made and will count on the participation of UNSD colleagues Ivo Havinga and Karoly Kovacs.

Next steps towards SEEA Tourism (phased approach)

- On-going: jointly with UNSD setting-up of Working Group (first informal meeting to be held back-to-back with Puerto Rico Conference on Nov. 20) that will report to UNCEEA
- By end of 2015: Technical Note (draft)
- In 2016: Identification and development of case studies