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Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/196 on sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America. It provides an update since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (A/70/215), on the ongoing efforts of the UN Member States in Central America for the implementation of existing and new programmes designed to promote sustainable development and sustainable tourism throughout the region.

I. Introduction

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations was requested to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session a report on the implementation of resolution 70/196 on sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), as the specialized agency of the United Nations vested with a central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, assumed the lead-role in preparing the present report.
2. The report provides an update since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (A/70/215), on the ongoing efforts of the Member States of UNWTO and the UN in Central America, in the implementation of existing and new programmes designed to promote sustainable tourism and sustainable development throughout the region. The report is based, among others, on the responses received from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, to the request for updates made by UNWTO through the follow up survey on UNGA Resolution 70/196 in early 2017 in order to monitor the implementation of the resolution.
3. The report builds on ongoing UNWTO research, initiated in 2016, to understand to which extent sustainable consumption and production patterns are integrated into national level tourism planning. The research includes a global survey on tourism planning and an extensive review of tourism policies of UNWTO Member States, giving particular focus to Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) issue areas¹.

II. Brief background on sustainability developments of relevance for the Central American region

4. Sustainable tourism has been acknowledged as a sector capable of making significant contributions to the three dimensions of sustainable development due to its complex linkages with other sectors, whose growth, combined with increased diversification, makes it an agent for sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its set of 17 Sustainable

¹ As of July 2017, a total of 73 responses were received from national tourism authorities, originated mainly from Europe (26; 36%), followed by Africa (18; 25%) and Americas (15; 21%). 71 national tourism policies accessed through official websites or obtained through UNWTO National Focal Points have been analyzed, including 20 (28%) policies from Africa, 19 (27%) from Americas, 14 (20%) from Europe.

Development Goals (SDGs), which constitute the ambitious conceptual and political roadmap for the years ahead, reflect this acknowledgment.

5. Tourism is part of this important roadmap as it has been included in three of the SDGs, which specifically refer to tourism: SDG 8, with regards to sustainable economic growth and decent employment; SDG 12, on sustainable consumption and production and SDG 14, on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, respectively. Nevertheless, and given the sheer size and the cross-cutting nature of the sector, tourism has the potential to contribute—directly and indirectly—to all 17 SDGs.
6. Among others, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, protection of the environment, productive employment, innovation, responsible consumption and production, gender equality, reducing inequality and ending poverty in all its forms, all key challenges to be addressed in order to achieve long-term sustainable development for the Latin American region where, despite having achieved considerable success on poverty reduction, “twenty-eight per cent of the population —168 million people— live in poverty”².
7. The 70th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. In the context of the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the IY 2017 aims to raise awareness on the contribution of sustainable tourism to development among decision-makers and the public, while mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change. The IY 2017 prominently features the need for measurement in destinations as crucial element for an evidence-driven development of tourism that is based on a participatory approach, inclusiveness and timely monitoring and which encompasses a holistic approach towards sustainability.
8. The Sustainable Tourism Programme of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP STP), launched in November 2014, advances the goals of the 2030 Development Agenda in the tourism sector by serving as a collaborative platform to bring together and scale up initiatives and partnerships to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production (SCP). The programme is one of the six initial programmes under the 10YFP framework which was adopted at Rio+20. It has the main goal to decouple tourism growth from

² Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Horizons 2030: Equality at the Centre of Sustainable, Development. Summary* (LC/G.2661/Rev.1), Santiago, 2016, page 47.

the increased use of natural resources and focuses on four areas of work: 1) Integrating SCP in tourism related policies and frameworks; 2) Promoting collaboration among stakeholders for the improvement of the tourism sector's performance – including the application of monitoring frameworks; 3) Fostering the application of guidelines, tools and technical solutions to mainstream SCP for destinations, enterprises and tourists; and 4) Enhancing sustainable tourism, investment and financing. In Central America, the programme engages actors such as the Ministry of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, National Counsel for Sustainable Development of Honduras, National Cleaner Production Center of Nicaragua and the Ministry of Environment of Panama.

9. A landmark agreement on global climate was reached at the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21) in Paris, France, December 2015. The Paris Agreement is another major achievement for international diplomacy, as a legally binding and universal instrument, with the central goal of keeping the increase in long-term global warming to less than 2°C, in which the shift to a bottom-up, pledge based system for climate action is built. Achieving this goal is particularly challenging for the Central American States considering its inequality in income distribution and acute disparities, the issue of reducing greenhouse emissions made by its highest income sectors, and the challenges related to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
10. Some of the features of the Paris Agreement include the obligation by all Parties to materialize their efforts through “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) and to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead, including regular reporting on their emissions and implementation efforts, as well as the obligation of developed countries to support the efforts of developing countries. A global stocktaking every five years is also foreseen in order to take stock of their collective progress towards achieving the objectives of the agreement and to guide further actions by Parties.
11. The UN Biodiversity Conference (13th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity) was held from 2-17 December 2016, in Cancun, Mexico. The meeting adopted the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-Being, which, among others recalls that “Tourism can contribute directly to the conservation of sensitive areas and habitats through a variety of activities and by raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity”, and recognizes that tourism, if well managed, can be an enabling agent of change. This is particularly important for a region which has a very rich biodiversity, variety of climates and ecosystems and is home to the Biological Mesoamerican Corridor.

A. Sustainable Tourism in Central America

12. International tourism plays a major role in the development of the Central American region and has grown significantly in recent years. In 2016, Central America received almost 11 million international tourists who generated US\$11.4 billion in revenues, up from 4.3 million arrivals and US\$3 billion in 2000. In 2016, Costa Rica lead the trend with a double digit growth in arrivals (+10%), followed by Guatemala (+8%), Nicaragua (+5% through September) and Honduras (+4% through November). As a result, overall arrivals to Central America grew at a rate of +6% in 2016, well above the global average of 3.9%.
13. According to *Tourism Towards 2030*³, the number of international tourist arrivals for the Central American region is expected to increase from 7.9 million in 2010 to 22 million by 2030. This shows that the region has a great potential to continue enhancing the development of tourism, so that it becomes an instrument of social inclusion that generates decent jobs, and contributes to the improvement of the quality of life of the population, within a framework of sustainability.

B. Framework, policies and legislation for sustainable tourism development

14. The national tourism planning in Central America is in line with a globally observed trend for long-term planning approach. Based on the national tourism policies of six Central American States analyzed (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) as part of the UNWTO research on tourism policies, the planning horizon in the region is 12 years, slightly above the global trend in which, on average countries (71 countries analyzed) have a planning horizon of 10 years.
15. Since 2015 five (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama) out of six respondents from the region to the follow-up survey on UNGA Resolution 70/196 have established new national policies, tourism plans, strategies, guidelines and/or programmes for the promotion and development of sustainable tourism. In the same period, Central American countries have modified their existing legislative or policy frameworks to support sustainable tourism development, mainly in the areas of biodiversity protection (six countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador,

³ Tourism Towards 2030 / Global Overview - Advance edition presented at UNWTO 19th General Assembly - 10 October 2011

Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama), indigenous and/or community development (five countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama), climate change (four countries: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama) and natural resource management (four countries: Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama). These policies share an overall goal to limit tourism's impact on the environment, and better prepare the sector for efficient management of cultural and natural resources.

16. Sustainable tourism is the cornerstone of the National Development Plan of Costa Rica 2015 – 2018, and initiatives such as the Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) are designed to advance sustainability of the sector. To support the development of sustainable tourism, Costa Rica has modified legislations and policies in the areas of biodiversity, climate change, indigenous community development as well as signing a Framework Convention to Promote an Open-State of the Republic of Costa Rica between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government as well as the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, in order to progress at the national level on issues of transparency, citizen participation and fight against corruption.
17. El Salvador has launched its Five-Year Tourism Plan 2014-2019 for the promotion and development of sustainable tourism, and has focused mainly on ecotourism and community tourism projects in indigenous areas and the establishment of Los Cobanos as a sustainable tourism area. El Salvador is also involved in projects to incorporate biodiversity in tourism activities, tourism projects in indigenous communities, and has also participated in the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity, Cancun, in 2016.
18. Guatemala launched the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2015-2025, a main planning tool in the country's tourism sector for the next 10 years. The plan was upgraded to a public policy in 2016. In addition, growth of the tourism sector is also featured as a priority goal in the General Government Policy 2016-2019, announced in 2016. Other major policies initiated by Guatemala and addressing the tourism sector include the 'Policy on visitor activity in protected areas 2015-2025' and the 'K'atun National Development Plan: Our Guatemala 2032'.
19. During the 2015-2016 period, tourism policy development in Honduras mainly focused on biodiversity protection and natural resource management. The country introduced legislation (Regulation for biological corridors, Agreement No. 0632-2015) promoting the creation of biological corridors and changes in the administrative procedures for evaluating environmental impact.
20. Nicaragua is in the process of updating the National Tourism Strategy. In addition, the country has implemented pilot initiatives in collaboration with the Sustainable Destination Alliance for the

Americas (SDAA). Nicaragua has also been participating in the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC) through the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), and implementing a Programme of Tourism Bonds for environmental sustainability. In addition, the "Law 690 - Law for Development of Coastal Zones" was reformed to include new initiatives for tourism investment in protected areas, and the new law, "Law 848 on National Heritage Declaration – Corn Island" was introduced.

21. Panama's policy initiatives during the period of 2015-2016 include the Green tourism Action Plan, which aims to foster sustainable tourism in the country; development of sustainability indicators for tourism areas and destinations; establishment of a joint group to respond in emergency situations, and national climate change committee engaging government institutions.

Poverty Reduction

22. Countries mostly address poverty through initiatives aimed at fostering the development of local communities and programmes focusing on better engagement of disadvantaged communities in the tourism sector.
23. The Government of Costa Rica has developed the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction 2015 - 'Bridge for Development' as part of the National Development Plan. The strategy contains actions for poverty eradication that rests on inter-institutional coordination, as well as in the use of a series of technical tools to make a more effective response to poverty.
24. El Salvador has undertaken a "Study on incorporating SDGs in the development of sustainable tourism as a strategy for reducing poverty in El Salvador", as well as developed tourism projects for youth and the Maya population as an alternative to improve their incomes and living conditions.
25. Guatemala has undertaken specific programmes such as the Chixoy Compensation Policy, Maya World, Carmelita Mirador and Caribe Maya to support community tourism ventures through specialized training to strengthen their capacity to attract tourists, training plans for community tourism guides, supporting micro, small and medium enterprises which will support development in protected areas.
26. Honduras has been promoting the inclusion of local communities in tourism sustainability programmes such as the Integrated Central American System of Quality and Sustainability

(SICCS) as well as the Communities and Educational Centers chapter of Ecological Blue Flags of Honduras programme.

27. Panama's initiatives on this front are focused on providing support to micro and small tourist enterprises through the development of an agreement between the Panama Tourism Authority and the Small and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Authority (AMPYME in Spanish) to support tourist activities.

Women, youth, and local empowerment

28. Three (Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras) out of four respondents of the global survey on tourism planning from the region considered gender equality a highly important⁴ issue in their national tourism policy. There was also a consensus on the importance of including local communities in tourism planning as all the four respondents (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Panama) considered this issue as highly important.
29. The Department of Tourism Development of the Costa Rica Board of Tourism worked to promote and support initiatives and projects that support the local development of communities and to improve the management and competitiveness of the different actors involved in the tourism industry including training and advisory program, rural tourism and community-based rural tourism program, support program for tourism Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), and training program in Costa Rican gastronomy.
30. In El Salvador, tourism projects, such as the Mayan Community Tourism Project, have been developed and are implemented aiming at promoting the empowerment of youth and the promotion of tourism in indigenous communities.
31. The government of Guatemala has planned, through the General Government Policy 2016-2019, to progressively increase the proportion of women in non-agricultural employment, through training programme for young people on tourism culture issues, internationalization programme for companies where the owners are women and strengthening of community tourism with an emphasis on communities identified with social vulnerability and tourism potential.

⁴ On a 5-point scale (0-Not aware, 1-Not at all Important, 2-Slightly important, 3-Moderately important, 4-Very important, 5-Extremely important) 'highly important' indicates scale points 4 or 5 in the global survey.

32. Honduras aims to improve the involvement of communities in the Ecological Blue Flags of Honduras (BAEH) programme.
33. The Strategic Guidelines of Tourism of Nicaragua have a fundamental focus on the human being and contains an inclusive framework for tourism development. In addition, the National Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development (PNDTS) integrates gender perspectives into its framework. Panama has developed touristic routes and training programmes with the participation of indigenous communities. In addition, as part of the 'One village one product' (OVOP) project - which seeks to contribute to local development and the elimination of poverty by training local human capital and fostering leadership skills that can serve to improve community capacity - in technical cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), officials from seven institutions have been trained to strengthen projects in the indigenous area of the Chagres.

Resource Efficiency

34. At the global level, 67% of the respondents of the global survey on tourism planning⁵ rated resource efficiency as highly important⁶ for national level tourism planning. All four countries responded from the Central American region indicated that resource efficiency is a highly important element in their national tourism planning. The focus given to various aspects of sustainable consumption and production by individual countries in their planning processes during the 2015-2016 period points to a growing awareness of the need for integrating SCP principles into the tourism sector.
35. In Costa Rica, the National Plan for Sustainable and Healthy Gastronomy, a public-private alliance for the development of Costa Rican gastronomy as part of a national model of sustainable development, has been developed. The plan aims among others, to contribute to carbon neutrality and conservation of biodiversity, which contributes to the integration of SCP into tourism planning.
36. El Salvador regularly participates in meetings with the Secretariat of Planning of the Presidency, Ministry of International Relations and UNDP to incorporate SCP in the operational tourism plans.

⁵ The global survey on tourism planning received 73 responses as of July 2017.

⁶ 4 and 5 on a 5 point scale (1- not at all important, 5-extremely important)

37. Guatemala has implemented the long-term sustainability and quality system named Seal Q, which seeks to improve the standards of quality and sustainability in the local tourism industry, in order to make Guatemala more competitive, by continued compliance with high quality standards. The country has also proposed a regulation for controlling emission from motor vehicles. The municipal agreement 111-2016 prohibits the use, sale and distribution of plastic bags, dropout straws and derivatives in the municipality of San Pedro La Laguna. In addition, Pro-forest Law is being implemented as a strategic tool for sustainable management in Guatemala. Moreover, the General Government Policy 2016-2019 focuses on the maintenance of forest coverage of the national territory. The share of renewable energy in the energy matrix has been increased by 5 percentage points, and a Law on water (Ley de Aguas, in Spanish) has been introduced with a view to increase Guatemala's resilience and adaptation to climate change.
38. Honduras's efforts include strengthening of good environmental practices through promotion of the Honduras chapter of Central American System of Quality and Sustainability (SICCS) programme, and voluntary agreements on cleaner production.
39. The Nicaraguan Tourism Institute (INTU) has continued to participate in the National Cabinet of Production, Industry and Commerce. Within the framework of the Model of Dialogue, Alliances and Consensus promoted by the government, the institute has been working in a participatory manner, with all stakeholders of the sector, towards tourism development.
40. In the Action Plan for the Development of Green Tourism in Protected Areas in the Republic of Panama, 2016-2026, which defines concrete actions to be executed as a matter of priority, one of the specific actions, under the thematic area on sustainable infrastructure, is to "design and implement guidelines that promote the establishment of sustainable tourism infrastructure inside and outside of protected areas, particularly those incorporating good practices for the management of solid waste, water-saving and energy efficiency."

Disaster response and resilience

41. As of May 2017, a selection of 31 national level documents related to emergency planning available on the Prevention Web of UNISDR have been reviewed as part of UNWTO research on national level emergency planning. These are mainly policies, strategies or frameworks, focusing on emergency, crisis or disaster management from Asia and the Pacific (39%), Latin America (16%) and Western Europe and Other Group (16%).

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42. Five (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) of the Central American respondents to the follow up survey on UNGA Resolution 70/196 on sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America maintained that they have a National Emergency Plan dealing with the preparation, response and recovery to natural and manmade disasters.
 43. Out of five which have a National Emergency Plan, four countries (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) have tourism integrated into their emergency plans. In comparison, preliminary results from the review exercise of national emergency planning documents showed that tourism was present in 53% of the 31 national emergency planning documents reviewed.
 44. In terms of national emergency planning, in Costa Rica, the National Risk Prevention and Emergency Management Commission (CNE) is the institution which manages events without differentiating people, regions, or sectors and prepare documents such as risk management in the National Development Plan 2015-2018. When an emergency occurs where several sectors are involved CNE convenes meetings with emergency representatives from each institution, always taken into account the Costa Rica Tourism Board to inform and be informed of the impact on business or on tourism infrastructure.
 45. In Guatemala, tourism destinations are covered under the plans of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction. Moreover, in addition to the Tourist Assistance program, tourists are specifically served in emergency situations.
 46. The Honduran Institute of Tourism is an integral part of the National Risk Management System SINAGER, protected by the pertinent legislation and actively participates in committees of prevention and early warning.
 47. The Nicaraguan Institute of Tourism (INTUR) is part of the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Attention (SINAPRED), and is also actively involved at the territorial level in the Departmental Committees for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response (Comités Departamentales de Prevención, Mitigación y Atención a Desastres (CODEPRED), in Spanish) and in the Municipal Committees for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response (Comités Municipales para la Prevención, Mitigación y Atención a Desastres (COMUPRED) in Spanish), which are entities at the Departmental and Municipal level.
 48. In Panama, the tourism authority is engaged in a Joint Task Group on Security and Tourism, coordinated by the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC in Spanish), responsible for ensuring and guaranteeing the safety of all the people who use beaches, rivers, beaches, trails or

other tourist sites or similar, as well as the safety of all public or private activity carried out in the country; and agrees that more activities or initiatives could be envisaged on this front.

III. National Priorities

49. Top three priority areas of sustainability for the Member States in the Central American region include protection of ecologically sensitive areas and natural heritage, tourism capacity building (human capital and SME's) and ensuring sustainable and inclusive development of communities. These priorities indicate the importance given to responsible consumption of natural resources by the tourism sector in the region. Moreover, the vision of the Member States in the Central American region are also well aligned with the 2030 Development Agenda, aimed at ensuring sustainable and inclusive development on the economic, environmental and social dimensions. Hence, by being sensitive to the priorities of the Central American States, specialized agencies of the United Nations system, as well as regional and international institutions can accelerate the sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America while strengthening their contribution to the SDGs.

IV. Overview of regional initiatives on sustainable tourism and sustainable development

50. Member States in Central America have been involved in implementation of projects aimed at promoting sustainable tourism in the areas of rural tourism (5 countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panamá), colonial cities tourism (4 countries: Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panamá), and ecotourism (3 countries: Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua).
51. At the regional level, through the Central American Tourism Integration Secretariat (SITCA) and its regional Member States, various programmes of the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in Central America on cross-cutting areas such as biodiversity protection, culture and heritage preservation, climate change, indigenous and community development, SCP, and safety and security, have been carried out.
52. Under the umbrella of the Sustainable Destinations Alliance for the Americas (SDAA), projects are carried out, which seek to contribute to increasing tourism destination competitiveness in the Central American region, by promoting sustainable destination management. The SDAA plans to positively impact the lives of residents in Central America by strengthening the region's competitiveness in the global marketplace, protecting both marine and terrestrial resources, embedding sustainability practices and improving the management of locally based tourism and

maximizing the benefits of tourism for local people.

53. El Salvador is currently involved in the implementation of the Mayan Community Tourism Project in the countries that make up the Maya World (Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico). The project has two components including a regional project portfolio of community-based cultural tourism and preparation of business plans for flagship projects, and a strategy for the international promotion of tourism based on Mayan culture. The objectives of this technical cooperation are: (i) to develop flagship projects on community tourism in the five countries with Maya population and archaeological sites, or natural sites of interest as an alternative to improve the income and living conditions of the Maya population; and (ii) to use lessons learned from the projects to create a dialogue with tourism authorities, which allows, in the long run, to extend such approach at national levels.
54. At the regional level, sharing experiences on sustainable tourism and sustainable development (6 countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panamá), biodiversity protection (5 countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panamá), and indigenous and/or community development (4 countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panamá) are the areas in which most Central American Member States have taken measures to promote national and sub-national cooperation in terms of sustainability issues.
55. In the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in Central America (2014-2018) it is shown that there has been an increase in the competitiveness of tourism enterprises to respond to new market trends. This is, according to Costa Rica, due to an increase in MSMEs in the region including in regional and national quality and sustainability systems.
56. Guatemala participates in the Central America Tourism Promotion Agency (CATA in Spanish), for exchanging experiences in the area, and works with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Maya World on community tourism projects. The country is also part of the Association of Caribbean States, which promotes tourism in the Greater Caribbean area, and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE in Spanish), engaged in financing of environmentally friendly projects. In addition, Guatemala works with UNDP, through Integral Coastal Marine Management, to promote ecotourism as a tool for financial sustainability for protected areas.
57. Honduras works with SITCA in transferring experiences in the field of sustainable tourism. The Central American Council of Tourism and the Central American Council of Environment and Development are entities within SITCA that support the implementation and regional cooperation in the mentioned topics.

58. In Nicaragua, over the past year and a half, international and national congresses and forums have been organized, with the aim of promoting the exchange of experiences and capacity building in themes relevant to the development of the tourism sector. At the territorial level, technical institutional support is provided for the participatory planning processes in the sector. In addition, Nicaragua has developed the Agro-tourism Farms Program, oriented to carry out actions to accompany tourism development in rural areas, and to contribute to the diversification and increase of income by strengthening the management of Agro Tourism Farm as a product of rural tourism framed in a strategy of climate-smart agriculture and good rural practices in tourism. The ‘Colonial and Volcanoes Route’ aims to promote the development of rural and sustainable community tourism, around the volcanic natural reserves and coastal areas of the Pacific Region of Nicaragua (departments of Chinandega, León, Managua, Masaya, Granada and Rivas), promoting the development of MSMEs Tourism and support local economic development.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

59. Central American States have continued their efforts to support sustainable tourism development, including the adoption of new legislations and policies, and to promote poverty alleviation through tourism, enhance the protection of biodiversity, cultural heritage and community development. Furthermore, national strategies for disaster prevention in many of the Central American States engage the tourism sector to facilitate monitoring and control mechanisms so as to ensure preparedness for any eventuality in destinations.
60. Tourism, if well managed and monitored, has the potential to contribute directly or indirectly to development and growth and consequently to the achievement of the global development agenda and all the SDGs. It is therefore crucial to precisely define the role tourism should play in the sustainable development agenda of the Central American region, up to and beyond 2030.
61. Integrating sustainable consumption and production patterns in the tourism sector in Central America, and hence advancing the 2030 Development agenda in the region, requires among others, identification and adoption of tourism planning approaches aimed at improving resource efficiency by tourism stakeholders. Approaches such as the circular economy thinking - which promotes business models based on renewable resources, longer and diverse product life cycles, shared consumption and interconnected value chains - can play a significant role when designing and improving resource management systems not only in the tourism sector, but for the sustainable development of destinations as well.

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62. Governments and other stakeholders of the region are invited to join the 10YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme which aims at promoting innovation and circular thinking to accelerate resource efficiency in the tourism value chain. The 10YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme is led by UNWTO with the governments of France, Morocco and the Republic of Korea as Co-leads and implemented in collaboration with the 10YFP Secretariat at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Over 120 proactive organizations (including governments, private sector, NGOs, academia, etc.) are currently members of the [10YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme](#).
63. The development of sustainable tourism in the region will benefit from being driven by an evidence-based approach, which focuses on the systematic and timely measurement of the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism in destinations, and the effective utilization of the of the generated information in designing informed policy decisions at national, regional and local levels.
64. The importance of adequately measuring socio-cultural and environmental impact of tourism is emphasized, as well as the recommendation to fill the present data gap in this area by taking advantage of the emergence of non-traditional solutions and sources of data, with an overarching goal of advancing the national sustainable development agenda beyond the tourism sector.
65. Governments and other stakeholders of the region are invited to join the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories ([INSTO](#)) to promote socially, economically and environmentally sustainable tourism, and to support the practice of informed policy making around the world, mainly through the identification and dissemination of best practices and enhanced awareness of and capacity-building for sustainability among tourism stakeholders.
66. The tourism sector in the Central America is encouraged to be part of the coordination, knowledge-sharing and communication mechanisms for security and emergency management at national and regional levels, and to collectively promote an evidence-based approach in developing measures for safe, secure and seamless travel, which will enable government agencies to make relevant, informed and coordinated decisions in areas such as visa facilitation in the region.
67. Continuous participatory processes which involve all stakeholders - public, private, civil society actors and local communities - across all levels, through innovative tools such as participatory budget, is strongly encouraged, thereby ensuring long-term participation of local communities in the sustainable development of destinations.