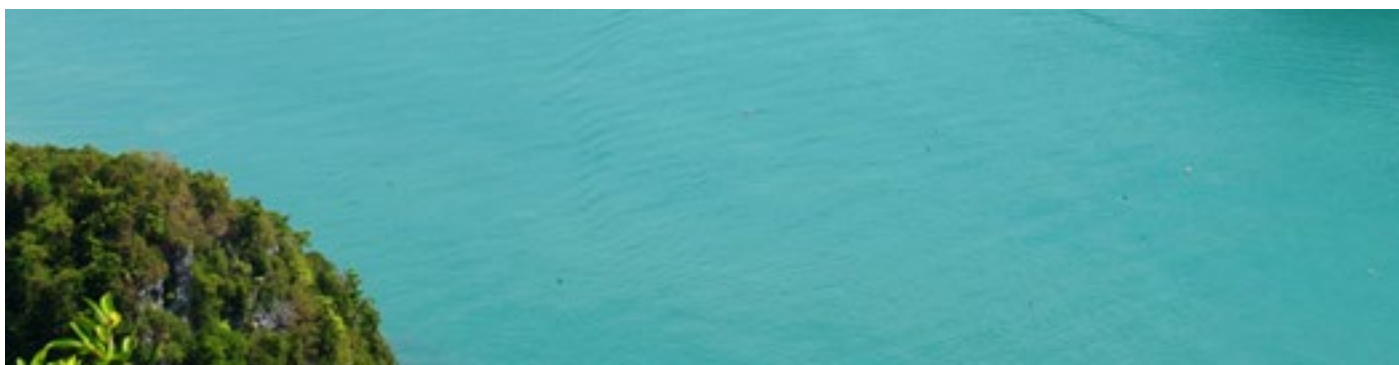




UNWTO / PATA **Tourism Updates**

Global Trends Shaping Tourism in Asia and the Pacific

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UN Chief tells private sector: “How we do business today will determine if we can do business in the future”

Paris, UN News Centre, 8 December 2015 – Speaking at the United Nations climate change conference (COP21), UN [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon told a room full of business leaders that the global gathering will serve to share progress made in important areas and to establish even greater ambition for the future.

“The collective momentum among the private sector for climate action is growing daily,” said Mr. Ban alongside the United States Secretary of States, John Kerry, and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Laurent Fabius, at a high-level meeting of the [UN Global Compact’s Caring for Business Forum](#).

Held over two days on the sidelines of [COP21](#), the third annual meeting of the Forum aimed to provide a platform for dialogue and action among business, investors, civil society, the UN and government officials.

COP21 saw thousands of people from all corners of the globe coming together to push for a new universal climate change agreement that will limit global temperature rise to less than two degrees Celsius.

“Across the world, businesses and investors are standing up for a strong agreement in Paris that sends the right market signals,” Mr. Ban underlined. “They are asking for a clear message that the transition to cleaner, low emissions energy sources is necessary, inevitable, irreversible and beneficial.” The UN chief stressed that it should be clear “there is no turning back,” and that all parts of society – CEOs, cities and citizens – must be part of the solution.

“Just over a year ago at my Climate Summit in New York, I called on business to make their voices heard and to demonstrate that green business is good business. Companies from

around the globe have responded. Leading companies are showing that they can address climate change and thrive financially,” he insisted.

He noted that more companies and investors are leading on climate action than at any time in history, and that they are doing so “because they understand the risks of climate change, and the opportunities inherent in addressing it.”

“We have seen the power of collaboration first-hand through our [UN Caring for Climate](#) initiative. This is now the largest coalition of businesses actively engaging on climate,” he explained, adding that one hundred companies are setting ambitious emissions reduction goals through the science-based targets initiative.

On the issue of carbon pricing, he indicated that companies have been “instrumental” in ensuring that a price on carbon is recognized as a necessary and effective tool. According to the Carbon Disclosure Project, more than 1,000 companies now say that they have set an internal price or plan to in the future. This reportedly compares to just over 100 companies a year ago – nearly a ten-fold increase.

“In the past year alone, over 2,000 companies and 500 investors have registered climate commitments through the [UNFCCC NAZCA](#) portal. But to limit global temperature rise to less than two degrees we must go much further and faster,” he warned.

Finally, Mr. Ban addressed all the private sector leaders in the room, telling them that as they leave Paris, he hopes they will carry with them a clear message to their consumers, employees, peers – and Governments – “that how we do business today will determine if we can do business in the future.”

See for further details of the COP 21:

<http://newsroom.unfccc.int/unfccc-newsroom/finale-cop21/>

and <http://unitednationssystemcop21.tumblr.com/>



UN report finds 90 per cent of disasters are weather-related

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 23 November 2015 – A new report issued by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) shows that over the last 20 years, 90 per cent of major disasters have been caused by 6,457 recorded floods, storms, heatwaves, droughts and other weather-related events.

The report, entitled [The Human Cost of Weather Related Disasters](#) finds that the five countries hit by the highest number of disasters are the United States, China, India, Philippines, and Indonesia.

“Weather and climate are major drivers of disaster risk and this report demonstrates that the world is paying a high price in lives lost,” said Ms. Margareta Wahlström, head of UNISDR, in a [press release](#).

“Economic losses are a major development challenge for many least developed countries battling climate change and poverty,” she continued.

The report and analysis compiled by UNISDR and the Belgian-based Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) demonstrates that since the first UN climate change conference (COP1) in 1995, 606,000 lives have been lost and 4.1 billion people have been injured, left homeless or in need of emergency assistance as a result of weather-related disasters.

The report also highlights data gaps, noting that economic losses from weather-related disasters are much higher than the recorded figure of \$1.891 trillion, which accounts for 71 per cent of all losses attributed to natural hazards over the twenty-year period. Only 35 per cent of records include information about economic losses. UNISDR estimates that the true figure on disaster losses – including earthquakes and tsunamis – is between \$250 billion and \$300 billion annually.

“In the long term, an agreement in Paris at COP21 on reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be a significant contribution to reducing damage and loss from disasters which are partly driven by a warming globe and rising sea levels,” Ms. Wahlström explained.



“For now, there is a need to reduce existing levels of risk and avoid creating new risk by ensuring that public and private investments are risk-informed and do not increase the exposure of people and economic assets to natural hazards on flood plains, vulnerable low-lying coastlines or other locations unsuited for human settlement.”

Ms. Wahlström recalled that the development year started last March with the adoption of the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#), a 15-year package endorsed by the UN General Assembly, which sets out clear targets for a substantial reduction in disaster losses, including mortality, numbers of people affected, economic losses and damage to critical infrastructure including schools and hospitals.

Meanwhile, Professor Debarati Guha-Sapir, the head of CRED, said climate change, climate variability and weather events are a threat to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals’ overall target of eliminating poverty.

“We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and tackle other risk drivers such as unplanned urban development, environmental degradation and gaps in early warnings,” she said. “This all requires ensuring people are risk informed and strengthening institutions which manage disaster risk.”

According to the report, Asia accounts for the “lion’s share of disaster impacts” including 332,000 deaths and 3.7 billion people affected. The death toll in Asia included 138,000 deaths caused by Cyclone Nargis which struck Myanmar in 2008.

In total, an average of 335 weather-related disasters were recorded per year between 2005 and 2014, an increase of 14 per cent from 1995-2004, and almost twice the level recorded during 1985-1995.

The extent of the toll taken by disasters on society is revealed by other statistics from CRED’s Emergency Events Data Base, or EM-DAT, which shows that 87 million homes were damaged or destroyed over the period of the survey.

The analysis also highlights that floods accounted for 47 percent of all weather-related disasters from 1995-2015, affecting 2.3 billion people and killing 157,000. Storms were the deadliest type of weather-related disaster, accounting for 242,000 deaths or 40 percent of the global weather-related deaths, with 89 per cent of these deaths occurring in lower-income countries.

Overall, heatwaves accounted for 148,000 of the 164,000 lives lost due to extreme temperatures, with 92 per cent of deaths occurring in high-income countries.

Finally, drought reportedly affects Africa more than any other continent, with EM-DAT recoding 136 events there between 1995 and 2015, including 77 droughts in East Africa alone. The report also recommends that there needs to be improved data collection on indirect deaths from drought.

See “disaster risk reduction“:

www.wcdrr.org/ and [voluntary commitments](#)

Implications to the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

The above reports are climate related and the sentiments and position of the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, and Ms. Margareta Wahlström, head of UNISDR have a deep bearing on the tourism sector.

While there is no doubt that the tourism sector is well aware of the implications of climate change and is doing a lot to advance the cause of sustainability it is also a vector and a victim of this phenomenon. In this respect it is worth drawing attention to the UNWTO/ UNEP pioneering study on “Climate Change and Tourism: Responding to Global Challenges” and to the more recent UNWTO study “Responding to Climate Change: Tourism Initiatives in Asia and the Pacific” where issues pertaining to carbon emissions, social responsibility of the public and the private sectors and the deep repercussions of climate change on world tourism in general and the Asia Pacific region in particular have been highlighted.

See the link of the study on “Climate Change and Tourism: Responding to Global Challenges” at: www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284417292

UN seeks to enlist global citizens as foot soldiers in battle against hate speech

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 2 December 2015 – The United Nations launched a campaign against hate speech, with senior officials calling for a global mobilization of citizens as foot soldiers in the battle to uproot a scourge that seeks to unleash a clash of civilizations in the name of religion.

“Hate speech has been with us for a long time,” UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Cristina Gallach told a symposium on the issue at UN Headquarters in New York, urging citizens worldwide who come across hate speech on social media to forcefully counter it.

“Today, however, more than ever, individuals are using hate speech to foment clashes between civilizations in the name of religion. Their goal is to radicalize young boys and girls, to get them to see the world in black and white, good versus evil, and get them to embrace a path of violence as the only way forward.”

Both Ms. Gallach and Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), the symposium’s host, stressed that the “loudspeakers for hate” have been amplified exponentially with the explosion of new means of communication beyond the traditional media, with Facebook and Twitter providing immediate worldwide access.

She called for passage and enforcement of laws prohibiting incitement of hatred or violence, and the use of communications to establish a counter-message.

“We must monitor social media and quickly respond to hate speech,” Ms. Gallach stressed. “Of course, in an age when Facebook has over 1.5 billion monthly active users, or Twitter has over 300 million users, monitoring might be almost an impossible task, but we can achieve this with the involvement of citizens of the world, who are going to be our crucial partners in combatting hate speech.”

Underscoring that the battle is a collective responsibility, not only for Member States, but for everyone, including the media, she highlighted corporations as crucial partners with the task of deleting content inciting violence or hatred.



Caption: Symposium on Hate Speech in the Media, organized by the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). Pictured l to r: Cristina Gallach, UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications & Public Information; Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, UN High Representative to the Alliance of Civilizations; and Jean-Paul Laborde, Exec. Director, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

Mr. Al-Nasser also noted the role played by new media. “We see how radical groups have hijacked these new media platforms and used [them] as an advocacy tool for their extremist ideologies, and inciting violence and hatred,” he said.

“In doing so, they have assaulted not only individuals, but also global values representing the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On the other hand, we see those who also use information technology to reinforce stereotypes, stigmatization and demonization against certain race, faith, or sexual orientation.

“That being said, our next goal should be winning the battle of ideas,” he stressed, citing the use of hate speech against migrants and minority communities blaming them for a nation’s problems.

The next symposium will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in April 2016.

Implications to the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

As noted by this UN announcement, hate speech is a corollary of, and potential contributor to, a Clash of Civilisations. Referred to as the “Other Global Warming,” the rise in xenophobia and intolerance is as much as a threat to tourism as the atmospheric “global warming.” In this respect it is worthwhile stressing the role of UNWTO’s Global Code of Ethics which in Article I of the Code states that “The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism; stakeholders in tourism development and tourists themselves should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples and to recognize their worth.”

UNWTO’s initiative to get the Global Code of Ethics ratified by the private sector which has been extremely successful, with tourism stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific playing their rightful part, will go a long way in combatting this scourge.

“Tolerance must be taught, nurtured and defended”

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 16 November 2015 – Tolerance is much more than passively accepting the “other;” it brings obligations to act, and must be taught, nurtured and defended, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, calling on the world to recognize the mounting threat posed by those who strive to divide, and pledge to forge a path defined by dialogue and mutual understanding.

“People are more connected – but this does not mean there is more understanding. Societies are ever more diverse – but intolerance is growing in many places,” said Mr. Ban in his message to mark the [International Day for Tolerance](#), marked each year on 16 November.

The UN chief said that sectarian tensions can be found at the heart of many conflicts, with the rise of violent extremism, massive human rights violations, and cultural cleansing. Moreover, the biggest crisis of forced displacement since the Second World War has spawned hatred and xenophobia against refugees and others.

Emphasizing that tolerance requires investment by States in people, and in the fulfilment of their full potential through education, inclusion and opportunities, Mr. Ban called for building societies founded on respect for human rights, “where fear, distrust and marginalization are supplanted by pluralism, participation and respect for differences.”

“This is the message of the International Day of Tolerance – reflected in the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, adopted in 1995, the Secretary-General said, adding that the same idea animates the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), which is being led forward by UNESCO across the world.

He also emphasized that the call “to practice tolerance” was written into the identity of the UN 70 years ago. “Today, in a world buffeted by turbulence and change, the Charter’s summons remains a vital touchstone for our work,” declared Mr. Ban.

Echoing many of those sentiments, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova **stressed**: “Tolerance is a new idea, one which we need now more than ever. It leads us to respect cultural diversity, ways of life and expressions of our own humanity. It is a necessary condition for peace and progress for all people in a diversified and ever-more connected world.”

UNESCO was founded 70 years ago on this very day on the basis that wars could be avoided if people learned to get to know each other better and understood that, “in the fertile diversity of their cultures, that which unites them is stronger than that which divides them,” emphasized Ms. Bokova.

She said that tolerance is a means of constructing peace; it accelerates innovation and creation, opening peoples’ minds to other ways to view the world.

“When violent extremism spreads messages of hate and intolerance, both on the ground and on social media; when human beings suffer persecution, exclusion or discrimination on the basis of their religion or background; when economic crises accentuate social divides and stand in the way of acceptance of others, such as minorities, foreigners or refugees; we must offer up a different discourse, an open message which calls for tolerance,” Ms. Bokova declared, adding that lessons of the past must be more visible and people must be reminded of the extreme situations which can result from rejection of others, racism and anti-Semitism.

“Diversity is a reality, calling us to adapt our policies and act appropriately, for which tolerance is key,” she said, stressing

that today’s world presents considerable opportunities to better understand each other, share stories, create a public space on a global scale.

Implications to the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

In an age of globalization, it was widely believed that increased freedom of trade, travel, transport would lead to a world that is more appreciative of global cultures. If the opposite has transpired, it is well worth further scrutiny, especially by policy-makers, academics and researchers. If left unchecked, it could pose a serious risk to tourism development in many parts of the world including Asia and the Pacific.

See for further details: [Declaration](#)



Racism will not disappear from football stadiums ‘by magic,’ warns UNESCO report

Paris, (UN News Centre) 30 November 2015 – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the professional Italian association football club Juventus have issued the first exhaustive overview of the effort to tackle and root out discrimination and racism in the world’s most popular spectator sport.

“The playing fields of football are built with the profound values of fair play, equality and mutual respect – they sometimes also display unacceptable racist, xenophobic and intolerant views,” said UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova said in the foreword the new report “*Colour? What Colour?*” released jointly with the Juventus Football Club over the weekend in Paris.

The report takes stock of what has been done and what is being done to combat racism and discrimination in the sport; it examines ways to assess actions undertaken and envisages other complementary actions, as well as offering examples of best practice.

Noting that “the existence of racism and discrimination in football is not a secret, but it is a shame on the game,” the 83-page report contains the fruit of research and surveys involving an international team of experts, researchers, football managers and officials, and concludes that “racism and discrimination will not disappear from the football stadium by magic.”

As the report has tried to show, they may be further reduced by systematic, coherent, and coordinated action by those who share the objective of promoting “a football of cultural diversity and social inclusion.”

All experts interviewed for this report agreed on the fact that eliminating racism and discrimination will not be a ‘walk in the park,’ but requires sustained and combined efforts from all sides, it said.

“Sometimes it is necessary to re-design the entire machine in order to achieve progress,” according to the report’s conclusion. “Sometimes re-adjusting or re-arranging some nuts and bolts are sufficient. From within the machine, it is difficult to judge, but from the outside, things may appear in a different light.”

In the foreword, Ms. Bokova argues that sport provides a unique platform to promote the values of intercultural dialogue and understanding, as well as gender equality, while reinforcing social inclusion. However, she cautions that it can also be exploited to divide and discriminate.

“We have seen the exchange of racial epithets between athletes, along with crowd taunts that are based on race, ethnic or cultural background – and these have occurred at all levels of sport,” she underscored.

“This report offers the first exhaustive overview of the challenge and proposes good practice that can be taken forward,” Ms. Bokova said, commending the Juventus Football Club for their political engagement against discrimination and racism in football.



“This report will allow UNESCO and other stakeholders to take this struggle to a higher level still,” she said.

To counter this challenge, UNESCO is acting across the board with all its partners to promoting the inclusion of anti-discrimination and anti-racism clauses in players’ contracts.

According to the UNESCO chief, since 2009, in multiple partnerships with football clubs – including Barcelona and Malaga FC (Spain), Ruby Shenzhen (China), Al Hilal (Saudi Arabia) and recently with Juventus – UNESCO has placed emphasis on the role of clubs in propagating the essential messages of tolerance, respect and inclusion.

Implications to the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

This is an interesting report from UNESCO. Football is a hugely popularly global sport that is rooted entirely in the power of teamwork, accompanied by skill, good training, motivation and determination. For such teamwork to be disrupted by racism of any kind can make all the difference between winning and losing in a high-stakes environment.

The same lessons of inter-cultural respect and dialogue have got huge implications for the tourism sector, which is perhaps the only global industry to see it as a core value. Tourism, sports and culture are all inter-related sectors. UNWTO has given sufficient emphasis to the subject of tourism and sport and to their interdependence since both are primarily leisure activities. Indeed many Ministries combine tourism and sports under one umbrella. While it is safe to say that racism in sports in the Asia Pacific region is not an “issue”, it is nevertheless useful to bear in mind the deeper implications of media exposure to questions of colour in the minds of young travelers from the region.

See for further details: [here](#)

On International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UN urges inclusion, access for people of all abilities

United Nations, UN News Centre, 3 December 2015 – The United Nations marked International Day of Persons with Disabilities with the theme “inclusion matters” to raise awareness and mobilize support for some one billion people living with disabilities who remain one of the most marginalized groups in the world.

“Building a sustainable, inclusive world for all requires the full engagement of people of all abilities,” [Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) said in his [message](#) on the [Day](#), which has been celebrated on 3 December since 1992.

Mr. Ban noted that earlier in 2015, the UN [Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction](#) recognized the key role people with disabilities can play in promoting a more universally accessible approach in disaster preparedness and response.

And in 2016, he said, the [UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development \(HABITAT III\)](#) will discuss a new urban development agenda to make cities inclusive, accessible and sustainable.

“As we look ahead, we need to strengthen development policies and practices to ensure that accessibility is part of inclusive and sustainable development,” the UN chief said. “This requires improving our knowledge of the challenges facing all persons with disabilities.”



Caption: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (centre) applauds in sign language. He is flanked by Miki Matheson (left), Programme Officer at the Disabled Peoples’ International (DPI), and Catherine Pollard, USG for General Assembly and Conference Management. UN Photo/Am.

Among the commemorative events around the world, at UN headquarters, the Day was celebrated with an event featuring panel discussions on such themes as 'Accessible New Urban Agenda and inclusion of persons with disabilities' and 'Invisible disabilities.'

In Paris, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) hosted a [conference](#) at its Paris headquarters entitled 'Inclusion Matters: Access And Empowerment For People Of All Abilities.'

UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova said in her [message](#) for the Day: "An inclusive society is one that defends the rights and dignity of every citizen, that empowers every woman and man to participate fully in every aspect of social, political, economic and cultural life."

"We have seen progress across the world, but persons with disabilities remain one of the most marginalized groups today," Ms. Bokova said.

The event included panel discussions, a screening of short films showcasing the courage and determination of people with disabilities in overcoming the obstacles they face, and a jazz concert.

UNESCO said the estimated one billion people living with disabilities worldwide face many barriers to inclusion in key aspects of society. Eighty per cent of them live in developing

countries. One in three out-of-school children has a disability and fewer than two per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries are in school.

Implications to the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

People with Disabilities (PwDs) are important to the travel industry, both as potential employees as well as customers and guests. The number of PwDs is growing globally by the day. But there is great disparity in policies, facilities and services within the tourism sector to cater to PwDs. Helping them improve their livelihoods as well as making it easier for them to travel will be one of the best ways of fulfilling the SDGs. There is perhaps a need for more awareness of PwDs as both a sector that requires assistance as well as a lucrative market in the Asia Pacific region. UNWTO's role in this field is quite significant with noteworthy manuals, publications and conferences organized on the subject: <http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/accessible-tourism>



APMED2030 puts Asia-Pacific on Road to Education 2030



Unesco 3 December 2015 media release - The massive work to unpack the Education 2030 agenda in Asia-Pacific has begun as governments, civil society, UN agencies, development banks and other partners have agreed to take immediate steps to implement it in the region.

A nine point plan of action to be carried out in 2016 was released at the close of the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED2030) held in Bangkok from 25-27 November 2015.

UNESCO Bangkok Director Gwang-Jo Kim said that APMED2030 draws on momentum from the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls on all countries to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

“We [hoped] that this would have a ripple effect, where global discussions reach the country level and sub-national level,” Mr Kim said. “We’ve heard from a range of stakeholders at this meeting, from member states, intergovernmental bodies to CSOs, UN agencies and development banks regarding their perspectives on the new education agenda and how they plan to take SDG4 forward. But this is just the beginning of our discussion.”

Jim Ackers, Regional Education Adviser of the UNICEF-East Asia Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO), said that there is great excitement about Education 2030 because of its focus “not only on learning, but also the purpose of learning – learning for transformation,” Mr Ackers said. “The right to education must continue to be seen as a human right, but also as a key enabler to the achievement of all the other SDGs.”

A broad range of stakeholders were represented at APMED2030: more than 200 participants from 40 countries attended, including education ministers and ministry representatives, civil society organizations focused on education, development partners, UN agency representatives, donors and researchers.

A unique feature at APMED was the high level of involvement from UN agencies and development banks. This was highlighted on the first day’s panel discussion, “Perspectives from UN Agencies and Development Partners on Education 2030”, moderated by Mr Kim. Representatives from UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNFPA, ESCAP, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank joined the discussion on the education agenda, and the cross-agency collaboration needed for its implementation in the region.

“Ambitious” was the way many APMED2030 delegates described Education 2030, but all were unanimous in their conviction that the work it will require to implement is essential to extending education to all people.



Caption: Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED2030) held in Bangkok from 25-27 November 2015, Photo: UNESCO Bangkok

“The reason for this conference is to focus on how regional cooperation can empower people,” said Dr Jinhee Kim, a Research Fellow with the Korean Educational Development Institute. “My real concern is how can we empower disadvantaged people, underprivileged people through this global initiative?”

The spirit of collaboration was strong and APMED and several of the delegates identified the need for greater cooperation within the region to make Education 2030 a reality in Asia-Pacific.

Dr Rokhsareh Fazli, Director-General of the Pre-primary Bureau of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Ministry of Education, said that too often education ministry officials are so focused on their specific countries that they miss out on the benefits of greater collaboration. “The EFA era taught us how difficult it can be to coordinate with other countries,” she said. This meeting can help us improve that coordination on all levels – national, regional and global.”

The ability to gauge the success of the implementation of the Education 2030 agenda in Asia-Pacific hinges largely on the ability to measure progress. Data was the major focus of the second day of the conference. Among the topics discussed were understanding the thematic monitoring framework and the 43 indicators of SDG 4, mapping the availability of data to monitor Education 2030 in the region and learning from national experiences in this critical area.

Scott Pontifex, Team Leader Regional EMIS (Educational Management Information System) Facility for SPC (Pacific Community), will be involved in the effort to gather data. “Education 2030 is a very ambitious framework. For the Pacific Island countries, they have a lot of capacity issues that will make monitoring of the framework very difficult but I think it’s a very valuable exercise and we’re very motivated to try to help countries monitor their Education 2030 agenda.”

Mohammad Shakir Habibyar, Monitoring & Reporting Senior Specialist for Afghanistan’s Ministry of Education, said that APMED2030 picks up on the “unfinished business” of the EFA era. “Education 2030 is an important agenda for the global leaders in education. The EFA agenda remains incomplete in Afghanistan and we have [instigated] measures to meet EFA targets and take the education agenda forward.”

Immediate actions

APMED2030 concluded with, “Next Steps: Actions for 2016”, which outlined four immediate actions to be taken by Member States and five by development partners and civil society organizations aimed at kick-starting regional efforts to implement Education 2030.

Member States agreed to carry out the following actions by the end of 2016:

1. Establish or strengthen a national coordination mechanism for SDG 4;
2. Map existing policies and programmes that contribute to SDG 4 targets in preparation for national consultations;
3. Organize national and sub-national consultations to analyse the Education 2030 targets and Framework for Action in light of existing plans to identify gaps and to plan actions to implement and monitor SDG 4;
4. Build or strengthen inter-governmental cooperation to foster synergies and mutual learning for SDG 4.

Immediate actions to be taken by development partners and civil society organizations included:

1. Review composition and terms of reference of regional/ sub-regional coordination mechanisms and to develop plans in consultation with stakeholders to support national efforts toward SDG 4;
2. Prepare advocacy communication materials that provide key messages on SDG 4;
3. Prepare guidelines for planning, implementing and monitoring SDG 4 based on capacity assessment and support alignment of national plans with SDG targets;
4. Map available data and data sources for SDG 4 indicators, as well as capacity needs in data management, reporting and use;
5. Develop and disseminate technical guidelines for monitoring SDG 4, including definition of the indicators, data sources and methods of data collection and analysis.

A series of consultations will take place in 2016 to initiate each of these actions.

The full outcome document is available here:

www.unescobkk.org/education/education-2030/apmed2030-outcome-document/

Background

The global Education for All movement was born in Asia-Pacific (Jomtien, Thailand) and the Education 2030 agenda was also launched in this region (Incheon, Republic of Korea). Having fully endorsed and embraced the vision, principles and targets of Education 2030, Asia-Pacific governments, development partners and civil society organisations have the unique responsibility to carry the torch for this new global education agenda towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.

Having examined SDG 4, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” its targets and the Framework for Action, and discussed the implications, opportunities and challenges of SDG 4 within country contexts, the participants of the first APMED2030 reflected upon the necessary steps, coordination and monitoring mechanisms at the country, sub-regional and regional levels and discussed the capacity development needs for the integration of SDG 4 into national education and other sector plans.

There is a general consensus that SDG 4’s focus on lifelong learning and its contribution towards sustainable development and global citizenship requires the engagement of and coordination among various sectors and ministries, civil society, and a wide range of actors and stakeholders at all levels. While the overall coordination mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have yet to be finalized, APMED2030 participants recognized that SDG 4’s targets reflect the aspirations of this dynamic and diverse region and thus agreed to embark on the following immediate follow-up actions during the course of 2016.

As we enter the next phase of collective action towards the achievement of Education 2030 (SDG 4), the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED2030) will be the first step towards building a common understanding of Education 2030 and preparing for its implementation at the regional and national levels. The deliberations at the meeting will attempt to unpack, through an Asia-Pacific lens, the various aspects of the FFA including the implementation modalities and develop a regional strategy to achieve Education 2030.

As part of Asia-Pacific’s preparation for the new education agenda, the findings of a regional assessment of the EFA architecture were discussed at the meeting. The monitoring, reporting and evaluation of SDG 4 requires better and further disaggregated data and more robust processes, and thus, orientation and capacity development in this area are also needed. This meeting identified the capacity development needs of Member States for the successful implementation of Education 2030, including for monitoring and reporting.

The meeting was co-organized by UNESCO Bangkok – Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) and the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), and with support from the Japanese Funds-in-Trust (JFIT). It gathered relevant technical-level officials of the ministries of education, the WEF 2015 co-convenors, development partners, and donors in the region.

Implications to the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

The Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 is important for all the tourism institutions, polytechnic and universities and colleges imparting tourism courses, as well as human resources development units across the industry because it has an implication on public policies, knowledge sharing and jobs.

There is a huge opportunity here for the tourism industry to make a substantial contribution by opening up opportunities for people with disabilities, growing the number of scholarships and creating educational funds for children of under privileged families. Other channels can also be explored, such as enhancing education systems for orphanages.

As this is specifically oriented towards Asia and the Pacific, the tourism sector of the region has much to learn from the report.

Biodegradable plastics are not the answer to reducing marine litter

United Nations, UN News Centre, 17 November 2015 – Widespread adoption of products labelled “biodegradable” will not significantly decrease the volume of plastic entering the ocean or the physical and chemical risks that plastics pose to marine environment, accord to a United Nations report.

The report, entitled [Biodegradable Plastics and Marine Litter. Misconceptions, Concerns and Impacts on Marine Environments](#), finds that complete biodegradation of plastics occurs in conditions that are rarely, if ever, met in marine environments, with some polymers requiring industrial composters and prolonged temperatures of above 50°C to disintegrate. There is also limited evidence suggesting that labelling products as “biodegradable” increases the public’s inclination to litter.

Its launch marks the 20th anniversary of the [Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities](#) (GPA), an intergovernmental mechanism hosted by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

“Recent estimates from UNEP have shown as much as 20 million tonnes of plastic end up in the world’s oceans each year,” said UNEP’s Executive Director Achim Steiner in a [press release](#).

“Once in the ocean, plastic does not go away, but breaks down into [microplastic particles](#). This report shows there are no quick fixes, and a more responsible approach to managing the lifecycle of plastics will be needed to reduce their impacts on our oceans and ecosystems.”

In 2014, a study by UNEP and partners estimated that about 280 million tonnes of plastic is produced globally each year and only a very small percentage is recycled. Instead, some of that plastic ends up in the world’s oceans, costing several billion dollars annually in environmental damage to marine ecosystems.

In recent years, concern has reportedly grown over microplastics, which are particles up to five millimetres in diameter, either manufactured or created when plastic breaks down. Their ingestion has been widely reported in marine organisms, including seabirds, fish, mussels, worms and zooplankton.



Plastic bottles and garbage waste from a village in Timor-Leste wash on the shores of a river and then spill into the sea. UN Photo/Martine Perret

The new report aimed to verify a thesis that plastics considered “biodegradable” may play an important role in reducing these negative environmental impacts.

It finds that plastics most commonly used for general applications, such as polyethylene (PE), polypropylene (PP) and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) are not biodegradable in marine environments. Polymers, which biodegrade under favourable conditions on land, are much slower to break up in the ocean and their widespread adoption is likely to contribute to marine litter and consequent undesirable consequences for marine ecosystems.

The study also analyzes the environmental impacts of oxo-degradable plastics, enriched with a pro oxidant, such as manganese, which precipitates their fragmentation. It found that in marine environments the fragmentation is fairly slow and can take up to 5 years, during which the plastic objects continue to litter the ocean.

According to UNEP, oxo-degradable plastics can pose a threat to marine ecosystems even after fragmentation. The report says it should be assumed that microplastics created in the fragmentation process remain in the ocean, where they can be ingested by marine organisms and facilitate the transport of harmful microbes, pathogens and algal species.

The report also cites research that suggested some people are attracted by “technological solutions” as an alternative to changing behaviour. Labelling a product as biodegradable may be seen as a technical fix that removes responsibility from the individual, resulting in a reluctance to take action.

Implications to the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

Tourism is an enormous consumer of plastic, with water bottles being one of the worst violators. Although there is much focus on recycling, prevention is better than cure. A lot more can and must be done to curb usage of plastics. The Sustainable Tourism Programme led by UNWTO under the 10FYP has taken up this issue in its deliberations and counts on the involvement of the Asia Pacific countries since it is of particular relevance to them.

For further details please refer to the link [here](#).

Trafficking in cultural property ‘source of enormous illicit profits,’ UN official tells forum

United Nations, UN News Centre, 5 November 2015 – Trafficking in cultural property has increasingly come to the attention of the international community and represents a source of enormous illicit profits, an official from UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stressed at a special event in St. Petersburg, Russia.

“In recent years, the world has witnessed the growing involvement of violent extremists and terrorists in the destruction, looting, trafficking and sale of cultural property, in complicity with organized criminal groups,” John Brandolino, the Director of UNODC’s Division for Treaty Affairs, told delegates attending a special event of the world’s largest anti-corruption forum.

“The challenges presented by this phenomenon are complex and multi-faceted, and clearly require responses at the national level as well as strong regional and international cooperation to meet them,” he added.

Mr. Brandolino said UNODC is honoured to be part of the global initiative recently launched at UN Headquarters in New York to protect cultural heritage and mobilize the international community against the trafficking and destruction of cultural property by terrorist groups and organized criminal networks.

“There is also growing awareness and evidence of the increasing involvement of organized criminal groups in the looting, trafficking and sale of cultural property,” he explained. “Such groups are also often involved in other types of crimes, such as illicit arms and drug trafficking, money-laundering, corruption and terrorism financing.”

According to UNODC, proceeds of transnational crime related to art and cultural property may amount to some 0.8 per cent of all illicit financial flows, between 3.4 and 6.3 billion dollars every year.

“Trafficking in cultural property is also used to launder the proceeds of crime, and has been identified as a source of financing for terrorist acts,” Mr Brandolino added. “This is clearly an urgent threat requiring the attention of the international community.”

In addition, he noted that there have been some relatively recent pronouncements on this subject by the UN community, including at the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Doha in April, as well as by the Security Council through a number of resolutions.



"Azerbaijan customs services: guarding cultural heritage." Exhibition by the Government of Azerbaijan. Photo: UNODC

Meanwhile, he recalled that both the UN and the international community have some existing tools and frameworks available, such as the Hague convention of 1954, the UN Convention Against Corruption and the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

In conclusion, Mr. Brandolino emphasized the importance of getting all organizations and national authorities represented at the forum to work together in addressing the challenges posed by the looting, trafficking and sale of cultural property.

Implications to the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

This alert raises some serious questions, especially in view of the close linkage between tourism and culture. The present position has been to castigate and criminalize the sellers but those who purchase these goods are equally to blame. It calls for a campaign of education and public relations where the National Tourism Administrations and Organizations of the Asia Pacific countries can play a valuable role. The UNWTO, UNESCO and the UNODC joined forces to promote a global campaign urging travellers to support the fight against a number of forms of trafficking. The Campaign was presented to the tourism sector at the International Tourism Bourse (ITB) in Berlin (5 March 2014).

See further information: [press release](#).

UN Civil Aviation agency calls for safer skies, more efficient procedures

Montreal, UN News Centre, 7 December 2015 – With global air transport doubling in flight and passenger volumes every 15 years, the United Nations aviation agency called for enhanced safety and efficiency to rule the world's skies.

“The air transport sector stands on the cusp of a very important era in the history of international civil aviation,” UN International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council President Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu and ICAO Secretary General Fang Liu said in a joint statement on annual International Civil Aviation Day.

“The commitments and actions on behalf of world States and organizations toward modernized and expanded civil aviation infrastructure and capacities have never been more important.

“Under its ‘No Country Left Behind’ programme, ICAO is working with great determination to raise global awareness on the fundamental importance of the effective implementation of ICAO Standards and Policies, which together support the enhanced safety, efficiency, security, economic development and environmental protection of the international aviation system.

“This is the most important and urgently required first step which must be undertaken if a State or Region hopes to improve its ability to access and realize the significant socio-economic benefits which derive from the availability of safe and reliable air services.”

The Montreal-based agency works with 191 Member States and industry groups to reach consensus on international

standards, practices and policies for a safe, efficient, secure, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible civil aviation sector, ensuring that ICAO Member States' local civil aviation operations and regulations conform to global norms.

This in turn permits more than 100,000 daily flights in civil aviation's global network to operate safely and reliably in every region of the world.

The ICAO Council has selected a new theme for International Civil Aviation Day for the years 2015-2018 inclusive: Working Together to Ensure No Country is Left Behind.

Implications to the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

Aviation, the primary mode of transport for long and medium haul travel, is also widely recognised as the safest. This is of particular relevance to the Asia Pacific region. This does not happen by chance but by carefully designed and universally applicable systems. Other sectors of the tourism chain of command have much to learn from these systems and how to apply/enforce them in the interests of a wider good. Indeed, safety is more important than security; it goes right to the heart of the prevention-over-cure argument. UNWTO and ICAO have been working closely together on aviation and tourism related matters and issued a joint statement at the 21st UNWTO General Assembly held in Medellin, Colombia which will interest all stakeholders of the Asia Pacific region (see topic.)

Contact Us

Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific

Email: asiastudy@unwto.org

www.unwto.org

