

Annex V. Observatory on Sustainable Tourism under the auspices of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO): Provisional Rules for the Operation and Management of Observatories

I. Introduction

1. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has been promoting the use of sustainable tourism indicators since the early 1990s as essential instruments for policymaking, planning and management processes at destinations. The present document aims to inform the Executive Council about the progress achieved in the establishment of Observatories (Part II), including an updated framework for the operation and management of a network of Observatories (Part III).

II. Observatories on Sustainable Tourism: Background & History

2. The International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO), previously referred to as the Global Observatories on Sustainable Tourism (GOST)¹, is an initiative addressed to policy makers, planners and tourism managers in order to strengthen institutional capacities for information management and monitoring in support of decision and policy making. The initiative intends to facilitate the establishment of a network of Observatories, through the systematic application of monitoring, evaluation and information management techniques, as key tools for the formulation and implementation of sustainable tourism policies, strategies, plans and management processes.

3. Since 2004, various Observatories have been established in China, in Greece, in the Danube region as well as in Mexico. They were set up collectively with local stakeholders as sustainable tourism monitoring systems.

4. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012 (Rio+20) highlighted for the first time the importance of obtaining more reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development and acknowledged the potential of tourism to make a significant contribution in this regard. The tourism sector is also committed to providing more evidence-based information in order to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also an outcome of Rio+20.

5. More recently at the sixty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2014, resolution A/RES/69/233 entitled "Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection" was adopted and endorsed by 107 Member States. The resolution invited Governments and other stakeholders to join INSTO in order to support better informed sustainable policy around the world, placing sustainable tourism firmly on the UN post-2015 development agenda.

6. Recently, the UNWTO Secretariat received several requests from established Observatories to join the network. The principles of the present document allow now also for those already established Observatories to join INSTO.

7. The expected impact of INSTO initiative is to generate reliable evidence-based data on sustainability, which can increase destination resilience by identifying early warning signs relative to

¹ As a result of feedback from international discussions with Observatories and in order to facilitate cross-cultural reference, the name is henceforth changed from GOST to The International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO).

risks to the sector and its destinations, document and warn of the impact of unsustainable practices and assist the sector to learn from incidences of good or poor practice.

III. The International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO), Proposed Baseline Issues for Monitoring, Reporting and Information Sharing

8. At the ninety-fifth session of the UNWTO Executive Council held in 2013, the Report of the UNWTO Secretary-General (CE/95/3(III)(b) Add.) on the implementation of the general programme of work, section three (III) of the addendum, "Setting up Observatories of Sustainable Tourism under the auspices of UNWTO" outlined the steps to establish an Observatory of Sustainable Tourism. Based on the experience outlined in the above-mentioned addendum and subsequent activities², the following additional actions are identified in order to set-up, operationalise and manage INSTO:

Baseline Issues for Monitoring

(a) **As from the time of application**, all Observatories shall provide UNWTO with a precise geographic definition of the monitored destination and its overall population size to indicate the scope of the area.

(b) **Each member Observatory shall monitor** at least a standard set of baseline issues.³ Based on the over 40 issue areas published in UNWTO's *'Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations: A Guidebook'*⁴, which are closely in line with the key issues defined by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the following nine baseline issues have been identified as "mandatory" issue areas to be monitored:

1. Local satisfaction with tourism
2. Destination economic benefits
3. Employment
4. Tourism seasonality
5. Energy management
6. Water management
7. Sewage treatment
8. Solid waste management
9. Development control

Besides covering the above-mentioned nine baseline issues, Observatories may monitor further issue areas which are most relevant for their destination⁵.

² Including the discussion paper *Global Observatories of Sustainable Tourism: Programme Operations and Management*, 2014 that was presented and discussed at the 3rd Annual Meeting of UNWTO Sustainable Tourism Observatories in China.

³ General reporting and data collection shall comply with the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008, as approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission. United Nations (2010), *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008*, UN, New York, available: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/seriesm_83rev1e.pdf

⁴ World Tourism Organization, (2004), *Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destination: A Guidebook*, UNWTO, Madrid.

⁵ For sub-national measurements refer to the UNWTO-INRoute Initiative (2013) 'A Closer Look at Tourism: Sub-national Measurement and Analysis – Towards a Set of UNWTO Guidelines', available online at: http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/towards_set_unwto_guidelines.pdf

Reporting

(c) **After joining the Network, each Observatory will have** a two year period to meet the requirements of reporting on all the mandatory issue areas (as listed in clause b.) In the first year, new Observatories are expected to report on as many of the nine core issues areas as possible.

(d) **An annual report** on the baseline issues and monitoring results shall be provided in English to UNWTO by each Observatory. It shall cover the calendar year and not exceed 15 pages. If there is a Regional Coordinator (RC), Observatories in that region will provide their annual reports to them, so it can be aggregated into one report for the UNWTO Secretariat.

(e) **Observatories that provide** the UNWTO insufficient annual reports or do not submit annual reports for two consecutive years will be considered inactive. Their Observatory status will consequently be revoked. Prior written notice will be given to an Observatory after they fail to submit an annual report.

(f) **In each of the UNWTO regions**, with five or more Observatories, unless other agreements are in place, an Observatory or other Institution shall be chosen by the observatories in the region to be the Regional Coordinator (RC) that reports for all Observatories in the region to UNWTO. The term of the RC shall last two years and can be renewed, unless other agreements are in place. The functions of the RC include the following:

1. **Ensure regular reporting.**
2. **Analyse results and reports collected from the other Observatories in the region**, with the aim of sharing lessons identified and learned with all regional Observatories.
3. **Prepare and submit an annual regional report**, in English, to the UNWTO Secretariat, including the findings from all Observatories in the region.
4. **Advise the UNWTO Secretariat when an Observatory in the region has not complied with clause e. above, on the submission of annual reports, as agreed.**
5. **Convene an annual regional meeting** to share experiences, early warnings, new emerging trends, challenges, and other relevant issues as well as to identify national/regional information needs.

(g) **An annual international INSTO Conference** will be held, within the framework of one of the Annual Regional INSTO Meetings (as per clause 5, above), on a rotational basis regionally, where experiences are exchanged and issues related to monitoring, standards for data collection and analysis, trends, emerging warning signals and best practices (studies and methods) are discussed amongst Observatories members of INSTO.

(h) **Observatories are encouraged** to participate in other regional and international meetings of Tourism Observatories, outside of the UNWTO INSTO Conference, although they are not obliged to do so, to further strengthen the economic development across tourism and to share results obtained.

Information sharing

(i) **Each Observatory will collect** and document success stories and examples of best practices. They can disseminate these stories nationally, regionally and to UNWTO in order to highlight success in the sector and to foster replication.

(j) **Each Observatory shall share** monitoring results with Observatories, the RC, if existent, and with other destinations as well as upwards to national/regional and international levels of government, where applicable, to serve decision-makers' needs at different levels supporting planning and management as well as responses to global issues.

(k) **UNWTO will support the sharing of information** among destinations and Member States and will support high level interventions where applicable by providing available aggregated information, national satellite accounts and documentation of success stories from Observatories to support sustainable tourism development.

IV. Approval Mechanism for New Member Observatories of INSTO

9. All Observatories should be committed to the long-term monitoring of issue areas through indicators and other measurement techniques to enhance the sustainability of tourism in destinations.

10. Key operational factors for the acceptance of an Observatory as a new member of INSTO include the following:

- i. Agreement to monitor a selected set of mandatory baseline issues (see clause b.).
- ii. Agreement to commit to maintain the same indicators for monitoring the nine mandatory (and possible further) issue areas in order to ensure continuity and comparability over time.
- iii. Agreement to report monitoring findings on a regular schedule to UNWTO Secretariat and/or to the RC, if available.
- iv. Agreement to produce and share success stories with UNWTO Secretariat.

11. The procedure for the admission of a new or existing Observatory that would like to become a member of INSTO is as follows:

- v. Submission of the Observatory **Membership Application** Form, including the acceptance of the Statutes of UNWTO and the commitment to the principles of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.
- vi. Completion and submission of a **Destination Profile**, providing basic data about the destination so that UNWTO can gain a better understanding of its characteristics.
- vii. Submission of a **Preliminary Study/Report** not older than 12 months of the date of application, which can demonstrate how the Observatory is currently monitoring or propose to monitor sustainable tourism issues. The report or study should include key sustainability issues for the destination, current monitoring processes, data availability, sources, gaps and needs as well as recommendations for the structure of the Observatory.
- viii. Request '**Letter(s) of Support**' from relevant stakeholders such as e.g. the national tourism authority/ies where the Observatory is to be established. In case of cross-border destinations, the letter shall be signed by all the relevant authorities involved. The letter must be written on official stationary bearing the letterhead and seal of the governmental authority, and be sent directly to the UNWTO Secretariat to the above-mentioned address.
- ix. Send these four above documents (templates are available, as applicable) to the UNWTO Secretariat via mail, fax, or electronic mail preferably in MS Word.

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- x. Conduct, where applicable, a **Stakeholders' Workshop** to validate the findings of the preliminary study/report, to discuss issue areas and indicators that the Observatory shall monitor and to agree on the implementation plan for the Observatory.⁶
- xi. Upon receipt and positive assessment by UNWTO of all submitted documents, the Observatory will be officially accepted as a new member of INSTO. **A Letter of Acceptance** will be sent to the Observatory, confirming the approval of the application as well as the supporting documents and granting observatory status, which implies the immediate recognition and coming into force, as per the date of transmission of this official communication, of all the rights and obligations of an INSTO member.

⁶ Already existing Observatories may not be required to conduct this Stakeholders' Workshop.