

Annex 2. Draft Terms of Reference for the Working Group on MST

Background

As the UN specialized agency for tourism, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability. It has the mandate “to standardize and improve the statistics of tourism, and to promote the integration of these statistics within the sphere of the UN system”.

Stakeholders at all levels increasingly require information to assess the opportunities and challenges that tourism brings to sustainable development.

The [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) leave no doubt: sustainability is at the forefront of policy. Tourism, considered in three of these Goals, is more than ever before expected to live up to the expectations of sustainability—not only of tourism itself, but also of tourism as a contributor to sustainable development.

Achieving the SDGs, requires a set of indicators that monitor the interface between the economy, environment and society in order to track their progress. This is especially true for the 3 targets dealing with tourism:

- Target 8.9: *By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products,*
- Target 12.b: *Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products, and*
- Target 14.7 *By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.*

In the same spirit of the [Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators](#) (IAEG-SDG)¹ that is tasked with developing the indicator framework for the SDGs, UNWTO firmly believes that such indicators need to be rooted in internationally agreed statistical standards and in countries’ national statistical systems.

In this sense, the standards for measuring tourism are the *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008* (IRTS 2008)², approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 39th session (26-29 February 2008) and the *Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008* (TSA: RMF 2008)³, which updates the 2000 version approved by the UNSC in its 31st session (29 February – 3 March 2000). The IRTS 2008 provides the comprehensive methodological framework (concepts, definitions and classifications) for collecting and compiling tourism statistics. The TSA: RMF 2008 contains the conceptual framework for linking tourism statistics to the System of National Accounts, allowing the economic measurement of tourism and the generation of aggregates such as Tourism Direct GDP.

Based on this methodological framework for tourism statistics (IRTS 2008 and TSA:RMF 2008) UNWTO systematically gathers tourism statistics and data on all forms of tourism (inbound, outbound and domestic), on the tourism industries and related employment, as well as some (macroeconomic)

¹ The IAEG-SDG has been established by the UN Statistical Commission at its 46th session to develop an indicator framework for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at the global level, and to support its implementation. Its terms of reference are available here: [http://unstats.un.org/files/IAEG-SDGs%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20\(April%202015\).pdf](http://unstats.un.org/files/IAEG-SDGs%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20(April%202015).pdf).

² United Nations (2010), *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008*, (online), available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/tourism/manual.html> (30-05-2014), paragraph 4.1.

³ Commission of the European Communities, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, United Nations and World Tourism Organization (2010), *Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008*, (online), available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/tourism/manual.html> (30-05-2014).

indicators from countries and territories around the world. UNWTO data sets (the *Compendium of Tourism Statistics* and the *Yearbook of Tourism Statistics* with annual series and the *Tourism Barometer* for short term trends) constitute the most comprehensive database on tourism worldwide.

In addition, it is important that the indicators are consistent with the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)⁴. The SEEA Central Framework was adopted as an international statistical standard by the UN Statistical Commission at its 43rd session in March 2012. The SEEA Central Framework represents the first statistical standard for measuring the environment and its relationship with the economy, including the measurement of flows between the environment and the economy. In addition, the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting has been recognized as an important framework for measuring ecosystems condition, ecosystem services and ecosystem degradation with countries being encouraged to experiment with the framework.

Basing indicators on standards will both ensure that; a) the statistical underpinnings of the indicators are based on an integrated accounting approach to ensure methodological soundness, and b) the indicators are in line with international standards of best practice to promote quality and comparability.

But before we can start sourcing indicators from the SEEA and TSA, a careful analysis is required, and possible methodological development, to see how these two sets of accounts can be linked to produce the necessary information. At the same time, it is acknowledged that indicators for global monitoring like those of the SDG are important but not enough to understand the complex relations between tourism and sustainability. The subnational perspective takes a prominent role here.

Aims

The Working Group is tasked with leading the development of the measurement of tourism in relation to sustainability. In the provisional draft proposal “[A Statistical Project to Support Mainstreaming Tourism in Sustainable Development](#)”, UNWTO identifies 3 main objectives, all very much related:

- (1) indicators for (global) monitoring, notably in the context of the SDG indicator framework;
- (2) linking TSA and SEEA; and
- (3) advancing towards an understanding of tourism in relation to sustainability in the broader sense. This entails going beyond the TSA-SEEA accounting approach to consider wider stakeholder needs, the relationship between different levels of spatial aggregation (global, national, subnational), other kinds of data, and the more social dimension of sustainability. This is very much related to the work of the UNWTO-launched INRouTe project on subnational measurement and analysis of tourism.

The (initial) focus will be a national accounting perspective on tourism and the environment, specifically the linking of SEEA and TSA. However, it is acknowledged that all 3 objectives are very much related and are likely to require work in parallel, especially given the information pyramid approach inherent to the initiative. Indeed, objective 1 is dependent on developments in 2 and 3. As the initiative progresses and certainly once the UNWTO launched [INRouTe project](#) submits its Handbook on the Measurement and Analysis of Regional Tourism, attention will shift towards the third objective.

⁴ European Commission, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations and World Bank (2014b), *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting 2012: Central Framework*, (online) available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/seearev/> (11-06-2015).

Members and Institutional Setting

UNWTO and the UN Statistics Division are jointly setting up a Working Group of national and international experts to lead the development of this initiative. It aspires to bring together experts in the fields of tourism management, tourism statistics/measurement and TSA with experts in the fields of environmental statistics and environmental and ecosystems accounting.

The Working Group will report both to the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA)⁵ and to UNWTO's Committee on Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account⁶. UNWTO's Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account Programme serves as the Secretariat of the Working Group.

The work of the Group will feed into the work of the IAEG-SDG and related initiatives (such as the UNEP-UNSD initiative undertaken by Chile and Sweden for Aligning Sustainable Consumption and Production Indicators with the SEEA). It is noted that the development of indicators for global monitoring of tourism in the context of the SDGs is contingent on the strict timeframe set by the IAEG-SDG.

Activities

To fulfill its aims, the Working Group will engage in the following activities:

- Contribute advice and ideas on the design and the development of the project.
- Submit relevant experiences on ongoing or previous country work on linking Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA) with Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA), and on deriving indicators from such an approach.
- Prepare short issue papers on the main topics as deemed appropriate to advance the initiative.
- Propose and collaborate in the creation of pilot case studies.
- Comment on the (various versions of the) documents involved in the project
- Contribute to the UN IAEG-SDG in order to ensure that indicators catering to the tourism related targets adequately reflect the conceptual framework on tourism statistics to ensure coherence and consistency within the global statistical system.
- Report to the UNCEEA and the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA.
- Other activities deemed appropriate by the Group or the Secretariat.

⁵ The United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting is a governing body comprising senior representatives from National Statistical Offices and international organizations. It was established by the [UN Statistical Commission](#) at its 36th session in March 2005 and is chaired by one of the country members of the Committee. Terms of reference and other information available here: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/>

⁶ The Committee on Statistics and TSA is a subsidiary advisory body of the UNWTO Executive Council. It acts in matters such as: proposing initiatives related to the design and implementation of tourism statistics international standards; promoting international comparability of tourism statistics by proposing initiatives relative to the collection, homogeneity, processing and dissemination of data; helping member countries in their initiatives to improve their respective national systems of tourism statistics (STS) and in the development of the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA); and liaising with other international bodies with delegated responsibilities for leadership and coordination of related international statistics and their standards within sphere of the UN system.

Editor(s)/Editorial Board

The Working Group will be supported by (an) expert Editor(s), or Editorial Board, whom under the responsibility of the Secretariat will be responsible for the main drafting of the (methodological) documents, notably the Technical Note, the (annotated outline to) the Methodological Document, the design of case studies, indicator proposals, etc.

Working Methods and Meetings

Physical meetings will be organized back-to-back with existing coordination mechanisms or related events that are expected to attract a significant number of Group members. In between meetings, the group will mostly interact electronically or through video conference.

A 1st meeting (informal meeting) of the Working Group is planned for 20 November 2015 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, back-to-back with the MOVE2015 4th International Conference on Sub-National Measurement and Economic Analysis of Tourism: Towards a Set of UNWTO Guidelines (www.puertoricomove2015.com).

It is expected that the group will celebrate its subsequent meetings back-to-back with the annual meetings of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account.

Additional face-to-face meetings will be held only if deemed appropriate by the Group or the Secretariat.