

NOTE by the former Chair of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and the TSA concerning UNWTO's responsibility related to statistics

Preliminaries

According to **Resolution 58/232 from 11 March 2004** related to the Agreement between the United Nations and the World Tourism Organization¹), adopted by the General Assembly in its 78th plenary meeting on 23 December 2003, it explicitly is – among others - mentioned in Article 13 of the Annex related to „Statistical services“ that *„the United Nations recognizes the World Tourism Organization as the appropriate organization to collect, to analyse, to publish, to standardize and to improve the statistics of tourism and to promote the integration of these statistics within the sphere of the United Nations system.“*

UNWTO-project „Measuring Sustainable Tourism“

Against the background of the UN 2030 Agenda and the „2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development“² UNWTO in partnership with the „UN Statistical Division“ (UNSD)³) has launched its **MST-project**, led by the multidisciplinary UNSD-UNWTO Working Group of national and international experts on sustainable tourism.⁴)

This project has **three main streams of work**:

- 1) A **Statistical Framework** to expand tourism statistics beyond its largely economic focus to also integrate environmental and social considerations, and to provide some guidance as to how to go about this across the relevant spatial scales (global, national and subnational);
- 2) **Engagement** with the **definition and measurement of SDG indicators**, including the development of a complementary set of sustainable tourism indicators;
- 3) A **Toolkit** to support the implementation of the Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism (SF-MST).

¹ Agreement between the United Nations and the World Tourism Organization: http://www.unsystem.org/CEBPublicFiles/a_58_232.pdf.

² See also <http://www.tourism4development2017.org/>.

³ See also <https://unstats.un.org/home/>.

⁴ See also „Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST)“: <http://statistics.unwto.org/mst>.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their relevance for tourism

At the Rio+20 Conference, Member States decided to launch a process to develop a set of “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs), which were to build upon the “Millennium Development Goals” (MDG) and converge with the “Post 2015 Development Agenda”. On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the universal, integrated and transformative **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**⁵⁾, along with a set of 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets.⁶⁾

Throughout 2015, in consultation with experts in tourism statistics and coordinated by UNWTO and the “UNWTO Committee on Statistics and the TSA”, several **tourism related indicators** were proposed to cover three SDG targets that explicitly mention (sustainable) tourism:

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

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In principle, related to the compilation of the respective indicators the **countries** are the **centre and starting point** for all monitoring and oversee national monitoring via their national statistical system. The national statistical system comprises the National Statistical Office, line ministries and other national institutions involved in monitoring. It is up to the countries themselves to decide on the level of detail of data and metadata they wish to share with the custodian agencies, and to what extent these should be published. By sharing more detail on the subcomponents of the indicators and the monitoring methods, and at a higher level of disaggregation, the data will be more credible and useful for different audiences.

Custodian agencies are United Nations bodies (and in some cases, other international organizations) responsible for compiling and verifying country data and metadata, and for submitting the data, along with regional and global aggregates, to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

The country data need to be **internationally comparable**. To this end, the **agencies are also responsible for developing international standards and recommending methodologies** for monitoring.

Another **central responsibility of the custodian agencies** is to strengthen national monitoring and reporting capacity. When country data are missing, collected using a different methodology or inconsistently reported by different sources, agencies may need to do estimates or adjust the data together with the specific countries. All final data to be submitted to UNSD will first be validated and approved by countries.⁷⁾

⁵ UN, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1, publication, New York 2015

(<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>).

⁶ See also „Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/resourcelibrary>.

⁷ See also <http://www.sdg6monitoring.org/news/roles-and-responsibilities>.

Summarizing, a **Custodian Agency** has the **following responsibilities**:

- **Collecting** data from countries
- **Supporting** increased adoption and compliance with standards
- **Strengthening** national statistical capacity
- **Communicating** and **coordinating** with national statistical systems (including on the validation of estimates and data adjustments)
- **Compiling** international data series, global and regional aggregates and providing them, along with the metadata, to the Statistics Division;
- **Preparing** storyline for the annual global progress report;
- **Coordinating** on indicator development with national statistical systems, other international agencies and stakeholders.

Presently, the tourism relevant indicators, for which **UNWTO is foreseen as the Custodian Agency**⁸, are

- 8.9.1: Tourism direct GDP as a proportion of total GDP and in growth rate (Tier II),
- 8.9.2: Proportion of jobs in sustainable tourism industries out of total tourism jobs (Tier III), and
- 12.b.1: Number of sustainable tourism strategies or policies and implemented action plans with agreed monitoring and evaluation tools (Tier III).⁹

The IAEG-SDG has classified all SDG **indicators** into **3 Tier** as follows:

- **Tier I:** the indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data is regularly produced by countries,
- **Tier II:** indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries, and
- **Tier III:** no internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested.¹⁰

Of the tourism SDG indicators, 2 are in Tier III and 1 is in Tier II. A lot of **work is ahead for UNWTO** in order to **create the methodological, technical and institutional prerequisites** that will enable it to start collecting, processing and submitting the relevant data in 2018/19.

⁸ Related to indicator 14.7.1 „Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries“ (Tier III) FAO and UNEP-WCMC were foreseen as Custodian Agencies.

⁹ See also „Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators, as of 20 April 2017“:

https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/Tier%20Classification%20of%20SDG%20Indicators_20%20April%202017_web.pdf.

¹⁰ See also <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/>

Tourism Statistics – tasks to be taken by UNWTO

However, taking into account the requirement according to the **2003 Agreement between UN and UNWTO** and – among other statistical tasks - the work related to the **tourism relevant SDG-indicators** as the responsible Custodian Agency it has to be considered the following:

- 1) Since **SDG target 8.9.** requires TSA results (a large number of the countries still don't have a TSA available¹¹) according to TSA:RMF 2008¹²), and **SDG target 12.1** requires implementing a reporting mechanism through a new international survey, efforts are necessary to support the countries in that respect which concern capacity building and the consideration of a new survey. Supporting the TSA work, an Expert Group has been recently launched by UNSD and UNWTO developing a worldwide TSA-Compilation Guide.
- 2) In order to collect the data (apart from the data already collected data for the UNWTO Statistical Yearbook¹³) and the Compendium¹⁴) the **respective infrastructure and resources** have to be made available, assured and improved which mainly concerns the following issues:
 - a. **Establishment of a modern data collection system:** The use of the internet for science research has been becoming standard, which mainly concerns also the data collection using web-based questionnaires. Due to this increasing importance a variety of (open source) web-based questionnaires are available which might be adjusted according to the particular requirements. There are several benefits for the respondents and the institutions processing the data, which are:
 - i. Already filled in data of previous years might be presented
 - ii. A support system that provides assistance directly when entering the questionnaire
 - iii. Specific input checks (warning and error notes) - less queries during the plausible phase
 - iv. Required calculations are done automatically (i.e. totals)
 - v. Secure, direct and fast data transmission can be guaranteed
 - b. **Establishment of an up-to-date base with easy handling for public users:** A modern database is essential for analyzing and presenting the collected data. A statistical database allows the processing of a large amount of data, generating and exporting tables in different formats according to the individual needs of the customer, including the presentation of data by charts and graphs. Such a database might include features which can only be fully accessed by subscribers and/or might foresee free guest access (i.e. less detailed data).
 - c. **Other channels of data dissemination:** Open-Data-solutions might be useful in order to provide the data to the research and academic community.¹⁵) Furthermore, the visualisation of results has to be given high priority (e.g. Infographs) since considering these opportunities might facilitate the understanding of complex statistical issues for a broader audience.

¹¹ See also „TSA data around the world“ (http://statistics.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/tsa_data.pdf) and „Global assessment on Status of Tourism Statistics“ (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/events/2017/manila/presentations/day1/04%2010-15%20Luba%20Zeifman.pdf>).

¹² See also https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesF/SeriesF_80rev1e.pdf.

¹³ See also „Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, 2017 Edition“: <http://statistics.unwto.org/publication/yearbook-tourism-statistics-2017-edition>.

¹⁴ See also „Compendium of Tourism Statistics, 2017 Edition“: <http://www2.unwto.org/publication/compendium-tourism-statistics-2017-edition>.

¹⁵ In general, „Open Data“ refers to the information collected, produced or paid for by the public bodies and made freely available for re-use for any purpose (see e.g. <https://www.europeandataportal.eu/en/what-we-do/our-activities>).

- d. **Provision of adequate human resources in order to manage data collection and data processing:** In order to manage the above mentioned tasks additional staff is needed in particular dealing with data management, data processing and survey design with technical education and ideally experiences in statistics (e.g. data scientists).

However, **all these efforts** are necessary due to the customers, citizens, business enterprises, public administration, politicians, and scientific communities of UNWTO Member States as well as other international institutions. **Satisfying their information requirements** through the products and services in the field of tourism statistics is the **most important target** and should be a **strategic priority for UNWTO** to secure its long-term relevance for Member States and its responsibility as a UN specialized agency.