

COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS

Nineteenth meeting

UNWTO Headquarters
Madrid, Spain
26-27 February 2019

Minutes

The nineteenth meeting¹ of the Committee took place in Madrid in 26-27 February 2019, at UNWTO Headquarters, Spain. This meeting gathered over 70 participants from 27 countries, including 11 out of the 12 official members² of the Committee and non UNWTO member States Canada and Sweden, as well as UNWTO Affiliate Members, other representatives from academia, the private sector and regional tourism administrations. The UN Statistics Division (UNSD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), Eurostat and Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-STAT) also participated.

Opening and statement by the Chairs

The meeting was opened by the UNWTO Executive Director, Spain as the Chair of the meeting (Austria is co-Chair of the Committee, having chaired the first two meetings of the 4-year mandate) and the Vice-Chair Georgia. They emphasized that the Committee is not only a robust technical committee, but more critically, an organ of consensus-building where experts can find common ground and come up with workable solutions that can be implemented around the world. The Committee led pioneering initiatives such as the development of the only two UN international standards related to tourism³ and the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST) currently under development.

¹ All detailed information (programme, list of participants, presentations and documents) are available at: http://statistics.unwto.org/committeestat_19thmeeting

² Austria, Brazil, Chile, France, Georgia, India, Mozambique, Peru, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Spain

³ The International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 and the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008

Recent developments on the Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST) project

UNWTO, as Secretariat of the Working Group of Experts on MST, gave a brief overview on the state of affairs of the project and informed on the outcomes of the 2nd meeting of the Working Group of Experts on MST⁴ (held on 24-25 October 2018 at UNWTO HQ). The Secretariat recalled that MST aims to expand the field of tourism statistics beyond the measurement of volumes and economic effects to include also social and environmental aspects. MST will help to better understand the status of tourism sustainability and to monitor progress, in particular in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project takes a step-by-step approach and includes:

- Development of a Statistical Framework
- Reaching international consensus and approval by the UN
- Supporting implementation of the framework in countries
- Data compilation

In the 2nd meeting of the Working Group of Experts, it was put in evidence that the project is on good track with its aim of getting the statistical framework adopted as the third international standard on tourism statistics, notably through the presentations of recent technical advancements in the research areas identified and also successful MST pilot studies in countries which managed to produce credible and comparable data.

The Secretariat also presented the final version of the Technical Note on linking the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), one first step and output of the MST project which provides a methodology and some implementation guidance to measure environmental flows (water, energy, greenhouse gas emissions and solid waste) in tourism industries. The Committee agreed to submit it to the next session of the UN Statistical Commission (5-8 March 2019), as well as to report on the process of developing the Statistical Framework for MST in view of its submission for UN Statistical Commission's approval in 2020. The proposed process towards this UN approval in 2020 includes two rounds of global consultation, reporting to the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and to UNWTO's statutory bodies as well as a meeting of the Working Group of Experts on MST.

The Committee encouraged its members and participants to raise awareness on the Statistical Framework in their respective National Statistical Offices in order to garner support because it is precisely these institutions which, through top level representation in the UN Statistical Commission, will be tasked with the decision to approve the document in 2020.

The Philippines gave a short introduction on the SF-MST Editorial Board. The mandate of the Editorial Board is to (a) review the papers prepared by the various sub-groups working on key conceptual issues (employment, social dimension and spatial areas); (b) review the draft statistical framework for MST before it is submitted for global consultation; (c) review the comments received through the different rounds of consultations; (d) ensure that the comments received are taken into account; and (e) strive for consensus on solutions on the identified issues. The editorial board, chaired by the Philippines, is composed of experts

⁴ Information on the meeting is available at: http://statistics.unwto.org/event/wge_mst_2ndmeeting

from Austria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Eurostat, ILO, UNSD and UNWTO. The Committee welcomed the creation of the Editorial Board and recognized its advisory role.

The Committee was informed on the comments received through the 2nd SF-MST consultation⁵. In the discussion on the proposed responses to the comments, the Committee reaffirmed the scope of the project of SF-MST as intended from the beginning (economic, environmental and social dimensions, at national and sub-national scales) and welcomed the drafting of a new chapter dealing with indicators to better equip compilers on how to explain the rationale for accounts-based indicators and also proposing a set of indicators mostly for international comparability purposes. The Committee took note of the interest on eco-tourism and sharing economy but recognized also that these issues might be best dealt with in subsequent revisions of the standard on basic statistics (International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics). It was agreed that the Editorial board would review all the comments received and incorporate them in a new version of the SF-MST as they see fit. The sub-groups on conceptual issues will advise the Editorial board on how to integrate the comments received in their respective areas.

Cooperation between international organizations

OECD informed on the latest advances in their current work on the measurement of tourism trade in Value Added (TiVa) and highlighted that this approach is complementary to the TSA and MST. The Committee took note of the OECD Working Party of Tourism Statistics work and priorities (mega-trends, TSA data collection, evidence-base for policy etc.) and welcomed the outcomes of the OECD/Eurostat 15th Global forum on Tourism Statistics (held on 28-30 November 2018, in Cusco, Peru).

Eurostat informed the Committee of its programme of work, notably the adaptation of the EU Regulation on tourism statistics (the legal basis), the voluntary data collection on TSA, the current projects on big data, and the data collection from online platforms.

Insights to specific sustainability challenges and their evidence-based approaches

The UNWTO Director of Tourism Market Intelligence and Competitiveness introduced the key findings of the report on “Overtourism? Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions”. The report examines how to manage tourism in urban destinations to the benefit of visitors and residents alike, showcasing strategies and measures to help better understand and manage visitor growth in cities. It was highlighted that “Overtourism” is a new buzzword for tourism congestion management and carrying capacity, and that the true challenge is not so much the number of visitors but the capacity to manage them.

⁵ Held between October and December 2018 among the members of the Working Group of Experts on MST and the Committee. All comments are available at: http://statistics.unwto.org/sf_mst.

The UNWTO Director of Ethics, Culture and Social Responsibility presented the Global Report on Women in Tourism, a first attempt to map women's participation in the tourism industry worldwide, focusing on five main areas: employment, entrepreneurship, leadership, community and education. In the discussion, it was stressed the need for improving gender disaggregated data in tourism statistics which is currently extremely limited or has low coverage.

MST research agenda on conceptual issues

As decided in the 18th meeting of the Committee, sub-groups of the Working Group of Experts on MST were established in 2018 to handle research on specific conceptual areas to feed into the development of the SF-MST. Three sub-groups (social dimension, spatial areas and employment in tourism) presented their key advancements.

The focus of the sub-group on the social dimension was how to approach the consideration of the social sustainability of tourism and the areas of specific interest that should guide the way in which SF-MST is structured. Some relevant approaches were identified such as social capital, social inclusion and exclusion, social equity and welfare, social cohesion and well-being. In the discussion, it was acknowledged the particular difficulty of the sub-group's work as social statistics in general are particularly complex and relatively less mature compared to for example the economic statistics.

The employment sub-group expressed its concerns on the limited availability of tourism employment statistics which remain rather fragmented and lack international comparability. Availability and quality of employment data in the sector is a major obstacle to adequately investigating and developing policy responses to sustainable tourism. The sub-group proposed 3 ways to support advancing the measurement of employment in the context of MST: (a) Measuring decent jobs in the tourism sector, (b) Developing an International Classification of Characteristic Tourism Occupations, and (c) UNWTO and ILO enhance their collaborative efforts to improve/standardise tourism employment statistics. As a first quick step to foster the production of employment data, the Committee agreed to consider the TSA Table 7 on employment in the tourism industries as a TSA core table together with tables 1 to 6.

The spatial sub-group presented its findings on some research areas: (a) making the connection between national and subnational level, (b) identifying and delineating subnational level tourism areas, (c) defining spatial scales and (d) proposing key issues to consider in the development of sub-national level data sets for MST.

The Committee welcomed the technical work led by the sub-groups and clarified that the sub-groups report to the MST Editorial Board and the Working Group of Experts on MST which will decide on the research developments.

UNWTO introduced a research paper on the method to allocate air emissions associated with transport activity. In the discussion, it has been recognized that while the implementation of the method might be difficult in countries in the short-term, it is important for SF-MST development to agree on the conceptual treatment of this issue.

MST on the ground

Sweden presented the results of its recently launched MST pilot study related to tourism's environmental footprint and pointed towards some policy applications.

Mexico showed the progress achieved in its ongoing MST pilot study which scope has been widened to incorporate the measurement of green jobs in tourism industries.

These pilots' experiences⁶ testify to the relevance and feasibility of the SF-MST both in the environmental and social dimensions. The Committee congratulated the excellent work of both countries and encouraged members to pioneer the implementation of SF-MST through pilot studies.

Canada gave an update on the key activities of the MST sub-group on implementation. The sub-group presented a proposed structure for a staged implementation strategy for MST. This included the outline for an implementation toolkit that should comprise: an introductory module on MST in capacity building and technical cooperation initiatives, core tables and indicators, an implementation roadmap for countries, a readiness assessment tool, identification of testing methods, and support for implementation.

Austria reported on the work of the MST sub-group on SDG indicators which focuses on the conceptualization and development of SDG indicators in coordination with the formal process of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG (IAEG-SDG). Austria recalled the state of affairs of the 3 SDG indicators for which UNWTO is custodian agency and the proposed replacements for the indicators that are not measurable:

- ⇒ 8.9.2: Proportion of jobs in sustainable tourism industries out of total tourism jobs (Tier III);
- ⇒ 12.b.1: Number of sustainable tourism strategies or policies and implemented action plans with agreed monitoring and evaluation tools (Tier III).

The discussion focused in particular on the concrete metric to propose to the IAEG-SDG to replace the current indicator 8.9.2. The Committee agreed to take a pragmatic approach and proposed an indicator with an established methodology (the IRTS 2008) and with the best country coverage in the UNWTO database: "number of employees in the tourism industries".

Austria informed the Committee that the sub-group developed a set of indicators proposed to complement the 3 SDG indicators for which UNWTO is custodian agency and which was presented at the meeting of the Working Group of Experts on MST.

⁶ Other countries have, or are in the process of, testing the relevance and feasibility of the Statistical Framework, these include: Austria, Canada, Cabo Verde, Fiji, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Philippines, and Saudi Arabia.

Tourism Satellite Account: what's coming next?

UNSD informed the Committee on the latest advancements on the drafting of the TSA Compilation Guide and the outcomes of the 1st meeting of the Expert Group (held back to back to the Committee meeting). The Expert Group aims to finalize the Compilation Guide by the end of the year for submission to the UN Statistical Commission in 2020. The Committee encouraged TSA implementation and recommended that countries use tourism statistics and TSA data for evidence-based policies and their monitoring.

The UNWTO Programme Manager of Technical Cooperation gave a brief overview of the ongoing and forthcoming technical assistance projects on TSA and basic tourism statistics worldwide.

Provisional decisions by the Executive Council:

- Encourages its members to support the international consensus process towards approval by the UN of the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism by:
 - Liaising with their country's respective National Statistical Institute at the highest level to raise awareness and garner support in preparation to the UN Statistical Commission's fifty-first session in March 2020.
 - Becoming active at any stage in the MST project through for example nominating experts for partaking in the Working Group of Experts on MST, ensuring their country's contribution to the global consultations and pioneering the implementation of the SF-MST through the development of a pilot study.
- Thanks the Committee for its continued in-kind contribution to the Organization statistical work, notably towards the development of the MST project and the TSA Compilation Guide.
- Commends countries for having implemented the Tourism Satellite Account and for pioneering implementation of the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism.
- The Secretariat suggests adjusting the name of the Committee as "Committee on Statistics" in line with current practice.