

## Towards an International Data Set for MST

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### ***Background and context***

The key role of the Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST) project is to support more informed decision making by providing a comprehensive set of information on the economic, environmental and social dimensions of tourism activity. The Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST) will provide the basis for collecting and organising relevant data at country and sub-national level on a coherent and comparable basis.

To take full advantage of the data compiled using the SF-MST, the collation of national level data on the three key dimensions of tourism is a logical next step. Such an activity, supported by capacity building and similar implementation work, would build on the current data collection process carried out by UNWTO and incorporate additional themes and some additional detail. This short paper discusses some initial proposals for an extended UNWTO data set that could be compiled for the purposes of international comparison on the sustainability of tourism.

Several introductory points are required. First, the initial proposals for data collections use the WG paper on Tourism Indicators which proposes a range of indicators linked to the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although this is an initial listing and for many indicators precise definitions are to be established, the SDG related tourism indicators provides a useful starting point for considering the types of data that might be the focus of international data collection work.

Second, in preparing this note there is no expectation that this is a finalised or mandatory list of data that countries must report on. Determining the structure and content for a final international data set will require ongoing development and consultation both in terms of the technical specifications (including linkages to the SF-MST which itself is still to be finalised) and in terms of establishing appropriate levels of statistical capacity at country level.

Third, there are a number of established tourism indicator sets and these proposals do not intended to overwrite or ignore these in any way. Rather, it would be intended that it will be possible to work together with existing tourism indicator sets to ensure that there is an appropriate range of data that are collected to support a range of assessments of the sustainability of tourism.

The paper is structured in two main parts. In the first part a list is provided of proposed data items building on the structure of the set of indicators and basic data collected for the UNWTO



Compendium release. In the second part there is discussion about the links between these data and the SF-MST, and the potential for other themes to be incorporated. Presuming there is no specific limit on the number of themes on which data are collected, a key issue in advancing this area of work is selecting the relevant themes and hence the coverage of the data collection work. Subsequent discussion can turn to the precise scope and definition of the data and indicators to be used for each theme.

## ***Proposed set of data for measuring the sustainability of tourism***

As introduced above, the initial proposals for an international MST data set build on the existing data collected for the UNWTO compendium of tourism statistics and use the framing of the SDGs to determine the scope of the themes that are covered by the data set. There are six main themes in the current UNWTO compendium:

- Inbound tourism (including arrivals, accommodation, expenditure)
- Domestic tourism (including trips, accommodation)
- Outbound tourism (including departures, expenditure)
- Tourism industries (including establishments, and data on accommodation and travel agencies)
- Employment (including number of employees and jobs)
- Complementary indicators on tourism demand and international tourism

The draft Working Group of Experts on MST paper on “Tourism indicators for Monitoring the Sustainability of Tourism” proposes around 50 indicators, some of which are based on the data currently collected. While the 50 indicators are spread across the 17 SDGs, from a statistical measurement perspective the data underlying these indicators can be grouped into eight broad themes. These themes are:

- i. Economic activity including output of tourism industries, visitor expenditure and international trade
- ii. Employment
- iii. Infrastructure
- iv. Environmental flows
- v. Environmental assets
- vi. Visitor numbers
- vii. Crime
- viii. Implementation of tourism statistics frameworks

Using these eight themes as the organising structure, the following table provides additional detail on the types of data that would be included in an international MST data set which would then be used to support the derivation of the indicators proposed for monitoring tourism’s progress towards the SDGs. The table indicates those types of data which are currently collected for the UNWTO Compendium.

**Table 1: Proposed themes for an international MST data set**

Theme	Sub-theme	Notes	Coverage in UNWTO Compendium
Economic activity	Output & value added by tourism industry	Special focus on accommodation, transport, health and agri-tourism Also incorporates TDGDP, gross operating surplus, intermediate consumption, productivity	Limited, mainly accommodation focus
	Visitor expenditure		Inbound and outbound only
	International trade flows		Yes
Employment	Tourism industries		Yes
	Gender		Yes
	Occupation (e.g. management)		No
	Education and skills		No
	Income / Compensation	Including wage rates/average earnings	No
Infrastructure	Transport	Expenditure on transport infrastructure	No
	Accessibility of tourism facilities		No
Environmental flows	Water use	By industry, per guest	No
	Wastewater flows	Treated	No
	Energy use	By industry, Renewable, per guest	No
	GHG emissions	By industry	No
	Solid waste generated	By industry, Recycled	No
Environmental assets	Marine and coastal areas	Extent and condition	No
	Protected areas	Extent and condition	No
Visitor numbers	Total flows and intensity	Per resident population, Duration of stay	Yes
Crime	Crime rates		No
	Visitor complaints		No
Tourism statistics	Implementation rates	SF-MST, TSA and SEEA	Limited
	Budget allocations		No

In those cases where a country compiles a tourism satellite account (TSA) it is likely that there would be additional information to satisfy more completely the data proposed under the

economic activity theme. The OECD Tourism questionnaire may be a useful starting point in this respect.

Data on environmental flows and assets is perhaps the largest gap compared to the current Compendium although additional data on employment in tourism will also be required. Further, as discussed below, data on the social dimension is very limited. Notwithstanding these limitations it is noted that collecting these data may be supported by leveraging opportunities with other statistical work that is now underway in all countries in relation to the measurement of SDG indicators.

### ***Coverage of the proposed international MST data set***

The coverage of the proposed international MST data set can be assessed from a number of perspectives. Overall, the eight themes cover the content of the SF-MST relatively well although there is limited development of indicators of the social dimension of tourism activity. This relates in particular to aspects of the social dimension such as social capital and the connections between local communities and tourism activity, and culture and heritage. There are some links to decent work but generally issues of equity and access have limited visibility. These are undoubtedly some of the more challenging areas of measurement, but it is important that the lack of coverage in these areas is recognised.

A similar finding in terms of coverage emerges when comparing the set of themes and sub-themes in table 1 with the 13 sustainable tourism indicator areas described in the 2004 UNWTO *Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations: A Guidebook*. Of these 13 indicator areas (see Table 2), many are well covered through the eight themes above but there is limited coverage in relation to sustaining cultural assets, community participation, tourist satisfaction, and areas 10-13 which focus on governance and management of tourism activity.

**Table 2: UNWTO 2004 Sustainable tourism indicator areas**

1. Well being of host communities
2. Sustaining cultural assets
3. Community participation in Tourism
4. Tourist satisfaction
5. Health and safety
6. Capturing economic benefits from tourism
7. Protection of valuable natural assets
8. Managing scarce natural resources
9. Limiting impacts of tourism activity
10. Controlling tourist activities and levels
11. Destination planning and control
12. Designing products and services
13. Sustainability of tourism operations and services
<i>Source: UNWTO (2004) Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations: A Guidebook</i>

Using the lens of these sustainable tourism indicator areas, highlights an important distinction between the collection of data for international comparison which is general data from official statistics sources and presented at national level and the collection of data for analysis of the sustainability of tourism at destination level which has been the usual focus in the discussion of policy and management on sustainable tourism. One area for discussion might therefore be the extent to which some of the data items in Table 1 might be collected at sub-national level, or for key destinations within a country, and if so how this might be conceived. Even if this were possible this would still leave the coverage of the international MST data set somewhat limited relative to the scope of the topics covered in Table 2.

Another relevant issue may also be the appropriate frequency of data, i.e. annual, quarterly, monthly, etc. While it is generally the case that international data collection requests data at annual frequency, it is likely that for some topics an understanding of seasonal patterns may be particularly important. Again however, it may be that seasonal impacts are less noticeable at national level and sub-national and destination level data are required for seasonal impacts, e.g. limitations on water availability, to be well understood. A point of discussion may be whether some data items in Table 1 might be collected on a quarterly or monthly basis to support better understanding of sustainability pressures.

More generally, since much work on the measurement of sustainable tourism has been undertaken at sub-national level, including for example the work on sustainable tourism observatories, it will be important to understand the current direction for measurement work at that scale and apply synergies where possible.

### ***Next steps***

This short note is intended to start a discussion on the appropriate focus for the collection of internationally comparable data to support the discussion of the sustainability of tourism. It starts from the scoping of data requirements implied by initial work on assessing the contribution of tourism to progress toward the SDGs and from the existing collection of data for the UNWTO Compendium.

There are a range of issues that require further discussion including:

- The appropriate coverage of themes and data items
- The potential for countries to compile the data and associated questions of capacity building and support, including links to work underway on measuring SDG indicators
- The potential for collecting, and the need for, sub-national and sub-annual data to support the assessment of tourism sustainability

Following discussion at the Working Group of Experts in October 2018, it is proposed that these issues be discussed further among the sub-group on MST indicators and proposals be refined and prepared for further discussion at the next meeting of the UNWTO Committee on Tourism Statistics and TSA in early 2019.