



THE OLIVE TREE

How travel and tourism can contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Jetwing
HOTELS
SRI LANKA

PATA®
Pacific Asia Travel Association

Travel Impact Newswire

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN, JETWING HOTELS HIRAN COORAY

UN World Tourism Organisation Secretary General Taleb Rifai has called for travel & tourism to never forget its primary calling: to make the world a better place.

This pioneering publication is a perfect partnership between the public and private sectors and the media to help make the world a better place.

Sri Lanka has overcome the challenges of a long and bloody war, and is now pursuing a path to nation-building. Travel & tourism is a critical contributor to this task, and the private sector has a major role to play.

As one of the country's largest private sector players in the travel & tourism sector, Jetwing is proud to be contributing to the job creation, cultural preservation, poverty alleviation in an environmentally friendly way.

We hope this publication will rally the entire PATA fraternity to forge stronger links with the UN system and other multilateral agencies in pursuit of a common objective: Fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals, well before the target of 2030.



MESSAGE FROM PATA CEO **Dr. MARIO HARDY**

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global vision for humanity and one that we all should work to fulfill.

Governments have also taken notice of the importance and impact of the travel and tourism industry as the UN General Assembly has adopted 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

As this publication illustrates, the industry has an active role to play in achieving these goals, however this can only be done through concerted efforts from both the public and private sector.

The title of the publication refers to the idea of the olive tree and its relationship to the idea of peace and understanding. We must remember that travel and tourism provides the perfect opportunity for people from various backgrounds to share their stories with each other in the hope that they can better understand each other as human beings, regardless of race, faith or religious belief.

As PATA acts a catalyst for the responsible development of travel and tourism to, from and within the Asia Pacific region, we will continue to work with our members to assist them towards these goals.

While many of these goals may seem unattainable, we must not lose sight of our responsibility in protecting the future for the generations to come.



MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE EDITOR IMTIAZ MUQBIL

Travel & Tourism is a unique global industry. As a contributor to poverty alleviation, environmental preservation, cultural conservation, and much more, it can rightfully claim to be the only one that can positively advance all the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Globally, travel & tourism is awakening to this powerful potential. So is the United Nations system.

I have been covering UN meetings at the Asia Pacific headquarters in Bangkok since the early 1980s. Behind the internal politics, the UN system and many other global multilateral agencies do a lot of great work. Their meetings, activities, reports and research can help the T&T industry make a robust contribution to the fulfillment of the SDGs.

To the ill-informed, the jargon-filled, bureaucratic UN system appears to make no sense, and have no relevance. That is not true. It just takes time and effort to understand, but once that hurdle is crossed, the system can prove to be very useful for decision-making and strategising.

This publication is an attempt to do exactly that.

It will help travel & tourism decision-makers “mine” the treasure trove of UN events, activities, campaigns, statistics and free reports and boost awareness of how the SDGs and T&T are deeply inter-linked.

In turn, the UN agencies themselves may better appreciate and respect the importance and value of travel & tourism in meeting their goals.

I thank Mr. Hiran Cooray, Chairman of Jetwing Hotels, Sri Lanka, and Dr. Mario Hardy, CEO, Pacific Asia Travel Association, for their enthusiastic support.

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Statistics to track ecological impact of tourism set for global launch

After decades of promoting its sunny-side-up economic benefits, the global travel & tourism industry is about to find out more about its darker side -- how much ecological and environmental damage it causes.

A statistical methodology for assessing the economic vs ecological impact -- known officially as “Measuring Sustainable Tourism” -- is due to be finalised at the 6th International Conference on



Tourism Statistics to be held in Manila from 21 to 24 June 2017.

As part of the many events that will commemorate the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017, the conference is being organised by the Philippines and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). It will gather Ministers, Statistical Chiefs, Policy experts and statisticians dedicated to sustainable development, environment and tourism.

In plain language, the statistical framework will make it possible for the industry to measure how much garbage it generates, how much water it uses, how much air pollution it emits and how it impacts in other areas such as land use, forest degradation, etc. This will make it possible for the industry to better analyse the cost-benefit value of various projects, establish carrying capacities and set reduction targets which can be monitored and compared across destinations and regions.

UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as: “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”. More than one billion tourists travelled during 2016 and it is projected that the annual number of tourists will reach 1.8 billion by 2030. The tourism sector - if well managed - can foster inclusive economic growth, social inclusiveness and the protection of cultural and natural assets.

According to the UNWTO, “The Manila Conference will be a landmark opportunity to discuss methodological advances, explore emerging issues and learn from pioneering country experiences in this area of measurement. UNWTO recognizes that, apart from being a technical exercise, the development and implementation of a statistical framework for sustainable tourism is very much a strategic endeavor that will require stakeholder engagement, inter-institutional coordination and political leadership.”

Sustainable tourism is increasingly relevant in national agendas and also recognized at the highest international level with the UN General Assembly having adopted several resolutions acknowledging the role of tourism in sustainable development, including the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The previous five International Conferences on Tourism Statistics in Ottawa (1991), Nice (1999), Vancouver (2001), Iguazu (2005) and Bali (2009), have driven the establishment of the core components of the System of Tourism Statistics. They are considered landmark events having decisively contributed to the development of key concepts, definitions, classifications and indicators which are now viewed as the foundation of tourism statistics.

However, despite the long-standing interest and discussion of sustainable tourism and the important advances in tourism statistics, there is as yet no standardized basis for the collection of relevant information, at either the national or subnational level. This is a significant gap, and one that limits the potential for the development of policies directed at advancing sustainable tourism. A gap that is acknowledged by Member States and various stakeholders.

The MST will fill this gap.

The UNWTO, with the support of the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), initiated the MST to build on previous strategic projects of UNWTO which resulted in the United Nations approval of the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) and the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics (IRTS). Indeed, in the IRTS, adopted in 2008, it is recommended that “linking tourism and sustainability be considered a priority”. This has recently also been underlined by the UN Statistical Commission.

The MST will measure sustainable tourism in its various dimensions (economic, environmental and social) and at relevant spatial levels (global, national and subnational). It will provide a common language and organizing structure to exploit the data already available and to identify additional data that may be needed. The foundation involves bridging the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism through two existing UN statistical standards: the TSA and the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA).

The Conference will yield a Declaration acknowledging the importance of developing a statistical framework for measuring sustainable tourism in fostering a common understanding for tracking progress and directing policy efforts.

Registration for the conference is free of charge. Participants are responsible for their travel and accommodation expenses. More details here: <http://statistics.unwto.org/mst>.

Key components of the conference:

Ministerial Roundtable: The Importance of Integrated Data for Tourism Policy

The SDGs and the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017 constitute a unique opportunity to advance sustainable, inclusive and responsible tourism. The SDGs and national agendas worldwide require a shift towards more integrated policy across economic, social and environmental domains. This, in turn, must be underpinned by more integrated data. Developing a statistical framework to measure sustainable tourism is thus essential in fostering a common understanding for tracking progress and directing policy efforts. Ministers from around the globe will discuss the opportunities and challenges that sustainable tourism brings to their countries, and how the use of more integrated data is supporting them in paving the way towards a more sustainable future.

Session 1. Towards a Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism

This session will present the first draft of the Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST) under development by the Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism. The framework will support more integrated and more sustainable management of tourism by providing a common language and organizing structure that integrates the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable tourism. In doing so, the framework will support policy and analysis at the global, national and sub-national levels. A panel of Chief Statisticians from around the world will comment on this draft and discuss the two conditions for the framework to be truly solution-centered: relevance (whether the framework includes the information required by users) and feasibility (how statistical solutions can be found).

Session 2. The Voice of Data Users

Quality statistics are, by definition, data that are fit for purpose. This session will cover some of the main expectations and requirements of data users at international, national and sub-national levels and how a statistical framework on MST should cater to these needs.

Session 3. Linking the Economic and Environmental Dimensions of Sustainable Tourism

The starting foundation of the MST statistical framework is to bridge the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism by linking two UN statistical standards: the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) and the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA). This session will present an overarching technical note and some pioneering pilot studies integrating economic and environmental data for tourism.

Session 4. Employment and Other Aspects of the Social Dimension of Sustainable Tourism

The MST initiative considers the three dimensions of sustainability (environmental, economic and social). This session will address employment as a key consideration of the social dimension and highlight how these data and the important cultural aspects of tourism may be incorporated to provide an integrated data view.

Session 5a. Sub-national Measurement in The Philippines

Session 5b. Sub-national Measurement and Addressing Spatial Scales

Tourism is “seen and felt” at the destination level, with management taking place at this level. At the same time, broader policy direction and resource allocation is often made at the national level, and policy implementation can be the role of intermediate, regional authorities. There is also an overarching demand for global monitoring as reflected in the SDGs. The relevance of information at different spatial scales is a strong rationale for harmonization between data at national, regional and destination levels to facilitate policy coherence and effectiveness.

This session will present advances in measuring tourism at sub-national level and the relevance for tourism management; as well as discussing at more technical levels the importance of delineating spatial areas and issues of comparability and coherence.

Session 6. Tourism Indicators for Monitoring the SDGs

The demand for high quality indicators to monitor progress has been most recently underlined by the adoption of the SDGs and the recognized importance of establishing clear, comparable and measurable indicators of progress towards these goals. There are three SDG targets that relate directly to sustainable tourism: 8.9, 12.b and 14.7. The session will address possible indicators for those 3 targets and the potential to identify indicators relevant to assessing the tourism contribution in other SDG targets.

Session 7. Sourcing Data on Sustainable Tourism

statistical framework supports the production of trustworthy data that answer the questions at hand. It does so by making most effective use of data that are already available, identifying data gaps, promoting coherence and consistency, and helping to focus and prioritize resources for data collection. This session will explore the potential to use various data sources, particularly big data, for the measurement of sustainable tourism and propose approaches to measurement when data are more limited.

For further information

- [The MST brochure](#)
- [Overview the initiative](#)
- [UNWTO's International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories \(INSTO\).](#)
- [Meeting of the Working Group of experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism](#)
- [Preliminary Meeting of the Working Group of experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism](#)
- [Complete list of pilot studies and country experiences.](#)
- [Measuring Sustainable Tourism – Concept Note \(Mar 2016\)](#)
- [Contribution to the IAEG-SDGs - SDG Indicators for “Sustainable tourism” \(March 2016\)](#)
- [A Statistical Project to Support Mainstreaming Tourism in Sustainable Development \(Jul 2015\)](#)
- [International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 \(IRTS 2008\)](#)
- [Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 \(TSA:RMF 2008\)](#)
- [System of Environmental-Economic Accounting \(SEEA\)](#)

Importance to travel & tourism

The importance of this conference to the future of travel & tourism cannot be overstated. For decades now, the “performance” of the national, regional and global travel & tourism industry has been measured entirely on visitor headcount and downstream benefits for GDP, job creation and income. Now, for the first time, a statistical methodology will be established to show the ecological, social and other impacts of that growth. This will go a long way towards helping re-balance the industry away from generating growth to managing it. That has long been overdue.



**Universal challenge:
World will see more old and
young people at same time**



A grandmother feeds her two year old granddaughter in Naubise, Dhading. Nepal Photo: Aisha Faquir/World Bank

Universal challenge: World will see more old and young people at same time

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 3 April 2017 – The United Nations advisory body on issues related to population and development today kicked off its annual session, with a focus on changing population age structures and sustainable development.

“Population ageing and population decline have now become key issues for a growing number of Member States,” Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo told the opening segment of the Commission on Population and Development’s [fiftieth annual session](#), which ran at UN Headquarters through 7 April.

He also noted that with global fertility at, or even below, fertility level, international migration “is becoming the main driver of population change for a number of countries.”

Noting that demographic trends and population policies have evolved over the past decades, Mr. Wu stressed the important role of the Commission.

John Wilmoth, Director, Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said that continued success in reducing death rates, including among older persons and for deaths due to heart disease, cancer and other causes previously considered intractable, has contributed to the further ageing of the world’s population.

He said that between 2015 and 2050, the population aged 65 or older in Europe will increase from 23 to 28 per cent. In North America, the corresponding percentage will rise from 18 to 23 per cent. By 2050, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania will all have more than 18 per cent of their populations at ages 65 and above.

In ageing societies, social protection mechanisms, pension systems and health care programmes are being adjusted and strengthened. Women's participation in the workforce is being supported more than ever before, and some countries are slowly pushing up the age of retirement.



Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's commercial hub, is considered one of the fastest growing urban centres in the region, with a population that has been growing rapidly for more than a decade. Photo: Hendri Lombard/World Bank

Meanwhile, due to a relatively slow decline in rates of fertility, many parts of Africa will retain a young population for decades to come, he said. Nevertheless, as the birth rate continues to fall due in part to continuing investments in sexual and reproductive health, there will be an opportunity for a “demographic dividend.”

As the relatively large youth cohorts of today enter the labour force of tomorrow, they will be responsible, on average, for a smaller number of children requiring their support, while the size of the older population will still be relatively small, he said.

If this future population of workers is empowered by having access to health care, education and opportunities for employment, countries will be in a good position to reap the full benefit of the favourable demographic situation caused by the temporary bulge in the age distribution as it passes through the working ages, he added.

In a statement delivered by his Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet, UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres, who said that progress in providing access to education and to sexual and reproductive health-care services, especially for girls and women, has improved the lives of women and children, and has led to falling birth rates in many countries.

“When this trend is accompanied by investments in human capital, especially for youth, a demographic dividend can result, accelerating a country's economic growth,” he said.

That dividend can be further enhanced with increased labour force participation by women, who must be empowered and afforded the same education and employment opportunities as men, Mr. Guterres said, stressing that men also must do their part, by sharing in household work and caregiving responsibilities.

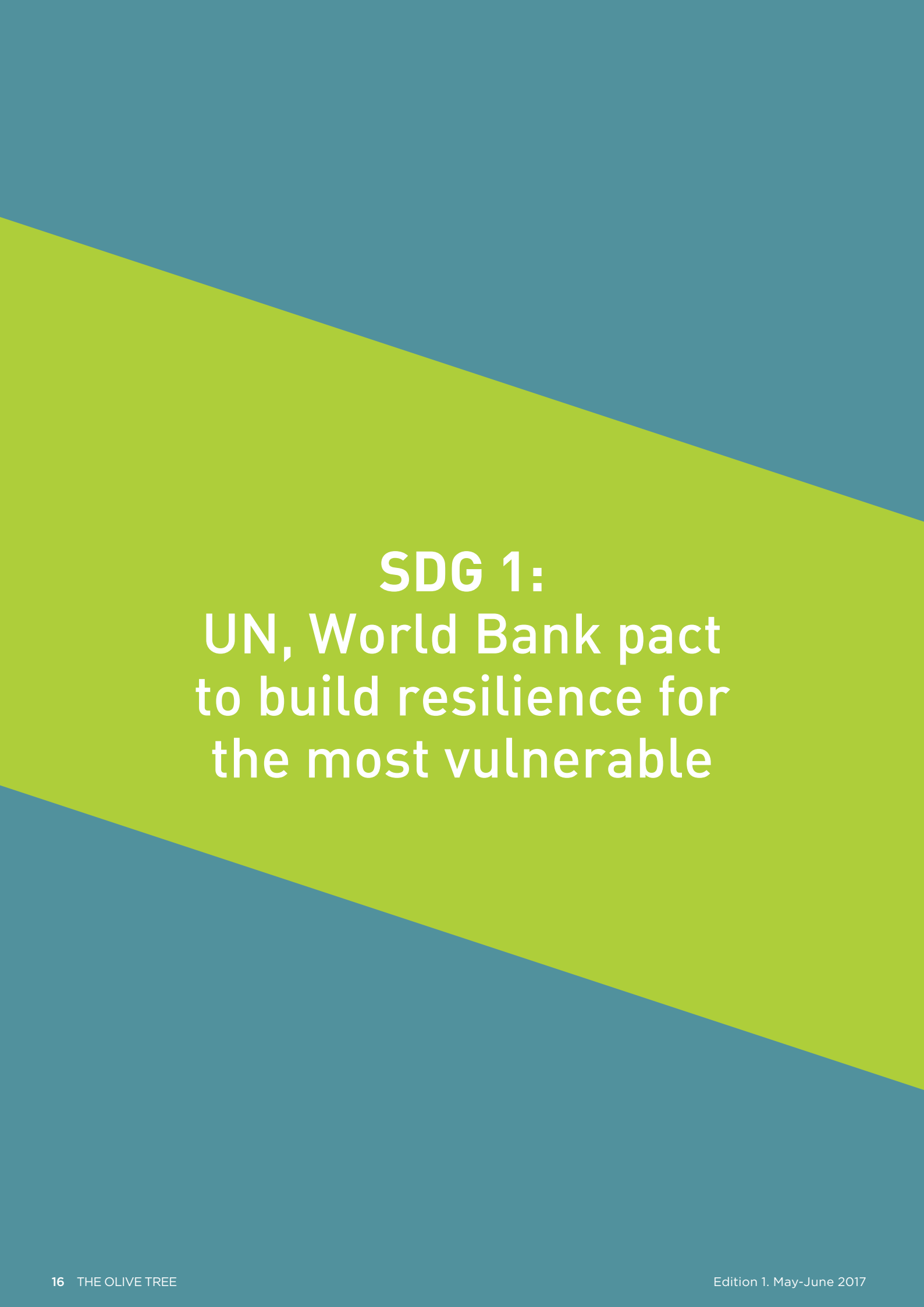
The former head of the UN refugee agency said that international migration can also help address the challenges of population ageing, by adding workers to the population and reducing the average age, encouraging all governments to facilitate migration that is safe, orderly and regular.

Today's opening session also featured a keynote address by EliyaZulu, Executive Director of the African Institute for Development Policy in Nairobi, on the topic of "Changing age structures and sustainable development in youthful societies.

In 2018, the General Assembly will convene an intergovernmental conference on international migration for adopting a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The Commission on Population and Development may choose as its theme for its session in 2018 "Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration."

Importance to travel & tourism

What demographers refer to as "populations", the travel & tourism refers to as "markets". Ageing populations are a major source-market for travel & tourism, especially senior citizens who are physically, mentally and financially able to travel. Young populations are also source-markets, as well as a source of employment for travel and tourism. Both are set to grow in future.



SDG 1:

UN, World Bank pact to build resilience for the most vulnerable



A young boy suffering from malnutrition is held by his mother at a UNICEF-supported Outpatient Therapeutic Program (OTP) in Baidoa, Somalia. Photo: UNICEF/Mackenzie Knowles-Coursin

SDG 1: UN, World Bank pact to build resilience for the most vulnerable

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 22 April 2017 – Building resilience for the world’s most vulnerable people by reducing poverty, promoting shared prosperity, enhancing food security, and sustaining peace in crisis-affected situations will be the focus of a new partnership framework agreed by the United Nations and World Bank.

According to a [joint statement](#), the framework, signed by UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres and World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim, is in response to global calls for the two institutions to work more closely together on prevention and reducing needs, risks, and vulnerability as the world faces a spike in violent conflict.

The Secretary-General was at World Bank headquarters in Washington, D.C., for the Spring Meetings convened annually by the Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They bring together central bankers, ministers of finance and development, private sector executives, and academics to discuss issues of global concern, such as the world economic outlook, poverty eradication, economic development, and aid effectiveness.

The UN and World Bank noted that human and economic costs of conflict are massive, affecting long-term stability and prospects for economic development and poverty reduction. Violent conflict drives 80 per cent of humanitarian needs costs, with the UN estimating that \$22.1 billion is required in 2017 for humanitarian assistance – a sharp increase from the \$9 billion needed just five years ago.

Under the framework agreed today, the UN and World Bank will work in complementary ways to: reduce the multi-dimensional risks of crisis and help prevent violent conflict; develop joint analyses and tools for more effective solutions; coordinate support to address protracted crises including forced displacement; and scale up impact by leveraging financing.

Building on nearly a decade of efforts to strengthen UN-World Bank collaboration in crisis-affected situations, and updating an earlier framework signed in 2008, the new partnership also reflects developments since then, including commitments made at the 2016 [World Humanitarian Summit](#) calling for a “new way of working” that shifts the focus from “meeting needs” to “reducing needs, risks, and vulnerability.”

The framework also notes the importance of aligning and leveraging financial resources, doing more through innovative, data-driven operational responses.

To advance this work, the two institutions will focus on building resilience in, among others: situations where there is a risk of violent conflict or ongoing conflict; situations with high levels of forced displacement; protracted and post-crisis situations; and when climate change and natural disasters affect these situations.

The framework notes areas for operational collaboration in which the UN and World Bank will:

Identify and reduce critical multi-dimensional risks of crisis, and prevent violent conflict in relevant countries or regions within the mandate of both institutions;

Coordinate support for situations of protracted crisis, including aligning strategies, objectives and collective outcomes, in particular for populations affected by forced displacement, and based on joint analyses and assessments;

Develop joint analyses and tools where the complementarity of mandates may enable more effective solutions; and

Scale up impact, by leveraging existing financing and comparative advantages, and ensuring that operational policies, frameworks, and tools used by both organizations facilitate cooperation and improve efficiency and complementarity.

Importance to travel & tourism

If the underlying policy driver of this UN-World Bank agreement is to shift the focus from “meeting needs” to “reducing needs, risks, and vulnerability,” travel & tourism can certainly play a major role in attaining this same objective. The World Bank is becoming more involved in travel & tourism, and the components of this agreement with the UN can be equally well applied in the interests of advancing a prevention-rather-than-cure agenda.



SDG 2:

UN agriculture agency moves to help rice farmers bolster production



Harvesting rice in Viet Nam. Global rice consumption trends are rising. Photo: FAO/Hoang Dinh Nam

SDG 2: UN agriculture agency moves to help rice farmers bolster production

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 30 March 2017 – Concerned about global rice production and eradicating hunger around the world, the United Nations agricultural agency today announced that it has teamed up with an international research institute to enhance rice farming and make it more adaptable to climate change.

“With over [three billion people across the globe eating rice](#) every day, rice is critical to global food security,” said Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General of Climate and Natural Resources at the UN Food and Agricultural Organization ([FAO](#)).

The UN agency announced that it will work with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) to support sustainable rice production in developing countries to improve food security and livelihoods, while also safeguarding natural resources.

According to FAO, the two organizations will work together to assist rice producing countries to “adopt improved and adapted rice varieties, enhance availability of certified seeds and also the transfer of knowledge,” including to control pests and through farmer field schools.

FAO and IRRI will also work to help women farmers participate in “viable, safe and dignified” entrepreneurial opportunities in the rice value chain, the UN agency said.

Meanwhile, FAO has developed the [Regional Rice Initiative for Asia and Pacific](#) which promotes enhanced crop resilience while increasing efficiency and farmers' income. In Africa and in Latin America the UN agency is engaged in scientific and technical cooperation including the sharing of technologies and best practices to increase production and productivity, including reduction of post-harvest losses and improved grain quality.

For its part, IRRI is engaged in strengthening capacities of all rice sector actors through its capacity development activities, including IRRI Education and the Sustainable Rice Platform, a global alliance to promote resource efficiency and sustainability in trade flows, production and consumption operations, and supply chains in the global rice sector.

Importance to travel & tourism

Did it ever occur to any tourist consuming a plate of delicious chicken fried rice that that humble crop is “critical to global food security.” Yes, it is very true. In many part of Asia, as the price of rice falls, rice-farmers are selling their land to developers of housing estates and golf courses. Over time, that trend will radically change land use patterns, and rice-producing countries will find their national food security at risk. Another issue to be monitored in the years ahead.



SDG 3:

**Medicines should help, not harm,
says UN health agency launching
global patient safety ‘challenge’**



The World Health Organization's Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety lays out ways to improve the way medicines are prescribed, distributed & consumed. Photo: WHO

SDG 3: Medicines should help, not harm, says UN health agency launching global patient safety 'challenge'

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 29 March 2017 – Underlining that medicines should fulfil their real purpose – help people, not harm them – the United Nations health agency today launched a world-wide ‘Challenge’ that seeks to reduce severe, avoidable medication-associated damage across the globe by half over the next five years.

“We all expect to be helped, not harmed, when we take medication,” said the Director-General of the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), Margaret Chan, [announcing](#) the new campaign *Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety*.

“Apart from the human cost, medication errors place an enormous and unnecessary strain on health budgets. Preventing errors saves money and saves lives.”

According to estimates, the global cost associated with medication errors has been estimated at \$42 billion annually or almost 1 per cent of total global health expenditure. In terms of impact on the health of people, for instance in the United States, medication errors cause at least one death every day and injure approximately 1.3 million people annually.

While low- and middle-income countries are estimated to have similar rates of medication-related adverse events to high-income countries, the impact is about twice as much in terms of the number of years of healthy life lost.

Furthermore, many countries lack good data, something that the new initiative will attempt to address. The initiative will also improve the way medicines are prescribed, distributed and consumed, and increase awareness among patients about the risks associated with the improper use of medication.

It also urges countries to take early priority action to address key factors, including medicines with a high risk of harm if used improperly, patients who take multiple medications for different diseases and conditions, and patients going through transitions of care, in order to reduce medication errors and harm to patients.

The actions in the Challenge will focus on four areas: patients and the public, health care professionals, medicines as products, and systems and practices of medication.

The initiative also aims to make improvements in each stage of the medication use process including prescribing, dispensing, administering, monitoring and use and the UN health agency will disseminate guidance, and develop strategies, plans and tools to ensure that the medication process has the safety of patients at its core, in all health care facilities.

“Over the years, I have spoken to many people who have lost loved ones to medication-related errors,” said Sir Liam Donaldson, the WHO Envoy for Patient Safety. “Their stories, their quiet dignity and their acceptance of situations that should never have arisen have moved me deeply. It is to the memories of all those who have died due to incidents of unsafe care that this Challenge should be dedicated.”

This is WHO’s third global patient safety initiative, following the Clean Care is Safe Care challenge on hand hygiene in 2005 and the Safe Surgery Saves Lives challenge in 2008.

Importance to travel & tourism

This is a serious issue in the health and wellness sector, one of the major niche-markets of travel & tourism. “Medical tourists” also fall victim to medication-related errors, but due to the lack of recourse, the issue does not emerge in the public domain. Health and wellness professionals who recognise the concern may wish to join this campaign in order to put prevention ahead of cure.



SDG 3:

Sport is force of social empowerment and engine for equality – UNESCO



A girl takes a shot during a basketball training session in Mogadishu, Somalia. UN Photo/Tobin Jones

SDG 3: Sport is force of social empowerment and engine for equality – UNESCO

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 6 April 2017 – There is no more powerful platform for promoting shared values than sport, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), Irina Bokova, said in a message marking the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

“Sport is a passion shared by women and men across the world. It is a force for [physical well-being and social empowerment](#). It is an engine for equality, especially gender equality, for including everyone, especially the most disadvantaged,” Ms Bokova said in her message on the Day.

Sport also promotes solidarity, respect, teamwork, responsibility, honesty, self-esteem and motivation, she said. However, despite the positive benefits, 3.2 million deaths are attributed to physical inactivity every year.

“This is why UNESCO has joined forces with the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) to combat sedentary lifestyles, starting with inclusive and equitable quality physical education at school,” Ms Bokova said. The Director-General also called for new commitment from all actors to ensuring public policies in fields of education, health, transport and urban planning work also with the private sector to develop legislation and national plans for sport.

“As the world takes forward the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, we must do everything to support sport to leave no one behind,” she said, while commending the work of volunteers dedicated to supporting sport for peace and development around the world.

In November 2015, the UNESCO member States adopted the new [International Charter of Physical Education and Sport](#), the spirit of which was ensuring respect for the fundamental right to sport for all men and women without discrimination, Ms Bokova said.

“Sport is a way to include everyone, including [refugees and migrants](#), to fight against stereotypes, to strengthen the foundations for peace in healthy society,” she added.

In August 2013, the sixty-seventh session of the UN General Assembly decided to proclaim 6 April as the [International Day of Sport for Development and Peace](#).

Importance to travel & tourism

From cricket to tennis, soccer, golf and the Olympics, sports events are major drawcards for travel & tourism, generating millions of dollars worth of indirect benefits. As many capable sportspersons are working in the travel & tourism industry itself, it may be worthwhile to link up with this broader initiative by having a global sports competition just for the travel & tourism sector.

SDG 6:
**Call for 'Radical' investments
to meet global water,
sanitation targets**



*Water, along with pollutants and contaminating agents, flows into a canal in Maputo, Mozambique. (File)
Photo: John Hogg / World Bank*

SDG 6: Call for ‘Radical’ investments to meet global water, sanitation targets

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 13 April 2017 – Against the backdrop of almost two billion people around the world relying on sources of drinking-water contaminated with faeces, the United Nations has called on countries to “radically” increase investments in water and sanitation infrastructure not only to protect their populations from deadly diseases but also to ensure that they are able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

“Contaminated drinking-water is estimated to cause more than 500,000 diarrhoeal deaths each year and is a major factor in several neglected tropical diseases, including intestinal worms, schistosomiasis, and trachoma,” [said](#) Maria Neira, the Director of Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health at the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) in a news release today.

The UN report, [Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water 2017](#), notes that while countries have increased their budgets for water, sanitation and hygiene at an average annual rate of about 4.9 per cent over the last three years, 80 per cent of countries have reported that the increase is still insufficient to meet nationally-defined targets for those services.

Therefore, in order to meet the ambitious SDG targets, which aim for universal access to safely managed water and sanitation services by 2030, countries need to use financial resources more efficiently as well as increase efforts to identify new sources of funding.

The Global Assessment also highlights that these efforts are particularly important for developing countries where current national coverage targets are based on achieving access to basic infrastructure and which may not necessarily provide continuously safe and reliable services.



The report has been issued by WHO, on behalf of UN-Water – the inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater-related issues, including sanitation.

According to estimates by the World Bank, investments in infrastructure need to triple to \$114 billion per year – a figure which does not include operating and maintenance costs.

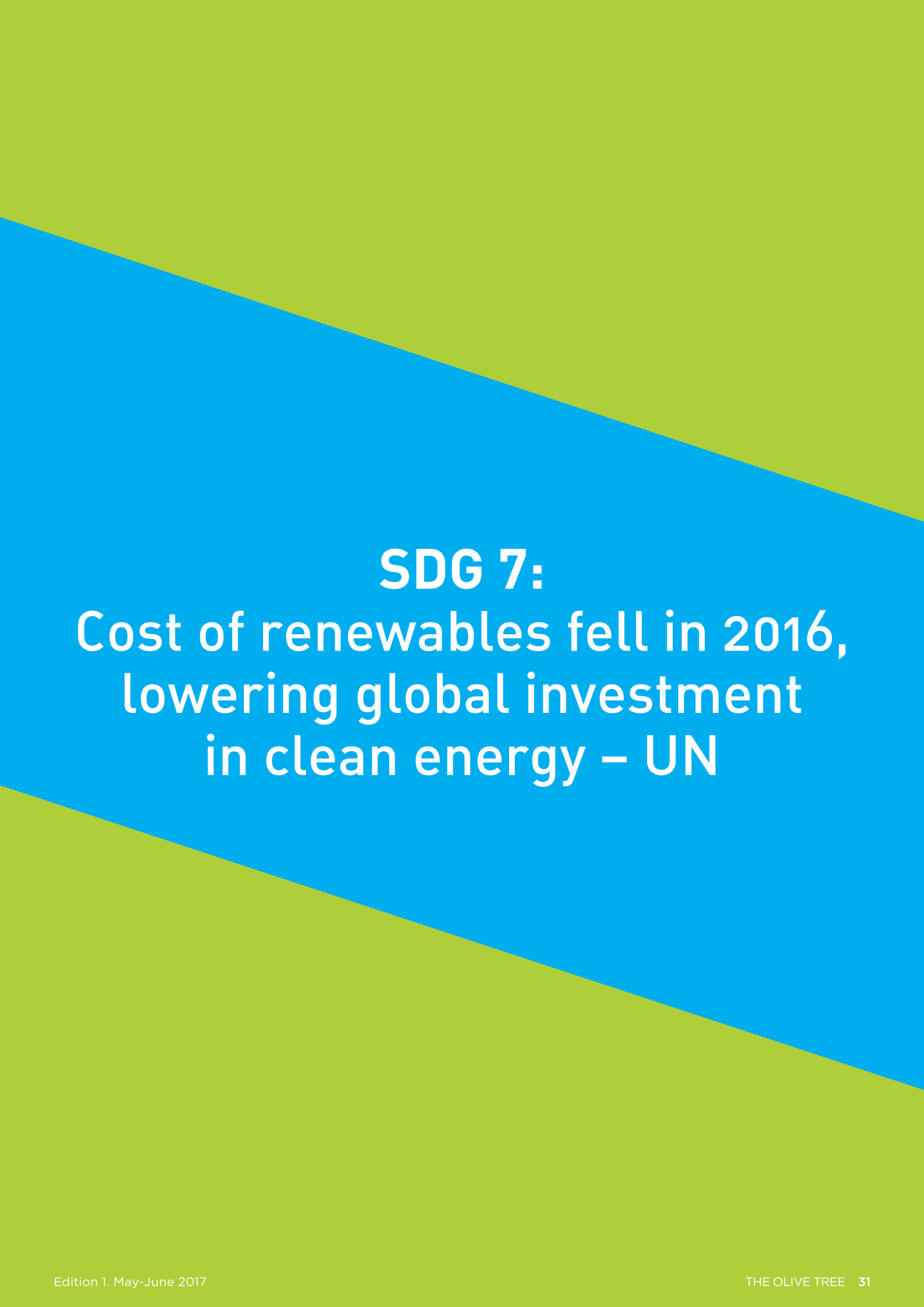
While this funding gap is vast, there are recent examples of countries having demonstrated the ability to mobilize the needed resources to meet development targets.

For instance, 147 countries around the globe were able to successfully mobilize the resources required to meet the Millennium Development Goal ([MDG](#)) [target](#) of halving the proportion of people without an improved source of water, and 95 among them met the corresponding target for sanitation. 77 countries met both.

[According](#) to Guy Ryder, the Chair of UN-Water and the Director-General of the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), nations have the ability to address the challenges of meeting the ambitious SDG targets. “Increased investments in water and sanitation can yield substantial benefits for human health and development, generate employment and make sure that we leave no one behind,” he said.

Importance to travel & tourism

Water is life. Travel & tourism is one of the world’s biggest consumers and perhaps wasters of water. It could also be one of the worst emitters of waste water. Both are set to grow exponentially. The statistics will emerge into the public domain following the UNWTO’s Measuring Sustainable Tourism initiative. They could prove to be a shock to the travel & tourism fraternity, and galvanise it into taking more water-saving action than is presently the case.



SDG 7:

Cost of renewables fell in 2016, lowering global investment in clean energy – UN



A wind mill at the Parque Eólico Camilo Ortega Saavedra wind farm in the Department of Rivas, Nicaragua. UN Photo/Mark Garten

SDG 7: Cost of renewables fell in 2016, lowering global investment in clean energy – UN

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 6 April 2017 – The world added record levels of renewable energy capacity in 2016, even as investment in clean energy fell, the United Nations Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) today reported.

“[Ever-cheaper clean tech](#) provides a real opportunity for investors to get more for less,” said UNEP executive Director Erik Solheim. “This is exactly the kind of situation, where the needs of profit and people meet, that will drive the shift to a better world for all.”

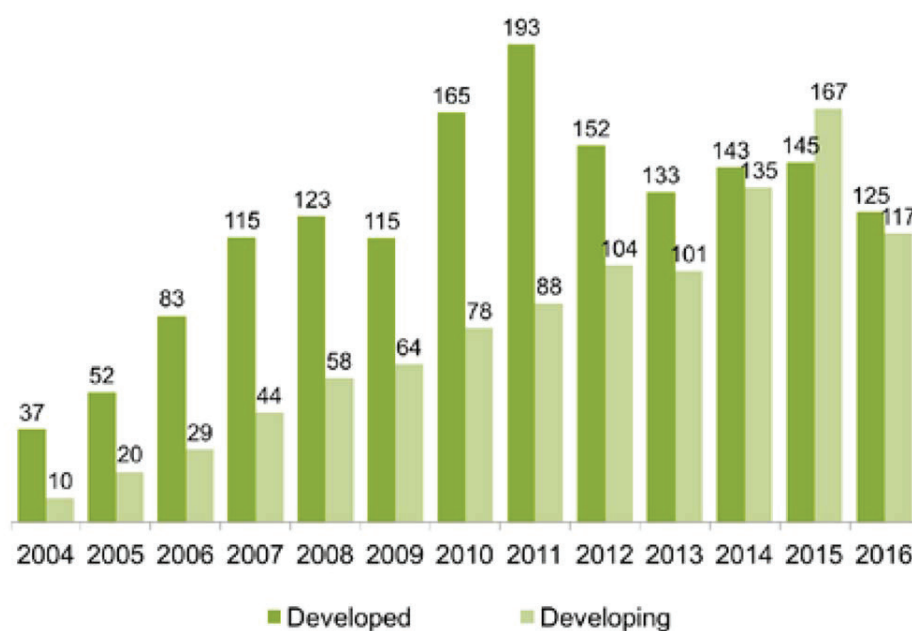
The report, [Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2017](#), found that wind, solar, biomass and waste-to-energy, geothermal, small hydro and marine sources added 138.5 gigawatts to global power capacity in 2016, up from 127.5 gigawatts added the year before. According to the press release, this difference is roughly equals to the energy created from the world’s 16 largest existing power producing facilities combined.

Another key finding is the decreasing cost of clean energy, as compared with traditional fuels. For example, the average dollar capital expenditure per megawatt for solar photovoltaics and wind dropped by over 10 per cent.

This meant that investors got “more bang for their buck,” according to UN Environment, which published today’s report along with the Frankfurt School-UNEP Collaborating Centre and the Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

“Investment in renewables capacity was roughly double that in fossil fuel generation,” the UN programme said.

While the capacity from renewables was equivalent to 55 per cent of all new power, the highest to date, total investment was \$241.6 billion, the lowest since 2013.



Global new investment in renewable energy. Volume adjusts for re-invested equity. Total values include estimates for undisclosed deals. Developed country volumes are based on OECD countries excluding Mexico, Chile, and Turkey. Source: UN Environment, Bloomberg New Energy Finance

The authors noted drops in investment among developing countries, including in China where investment had been rising the past 11 years. Investment in offshore windmills in China, however, peaked at \$4.1 billion.

Meanwhile, in Europe, investment rose, led by the United Kingdom and Germany. The continent's investment in renewables overall rose three per cent to \$59.8 billion.

The most hopeful sign last year for the future greening of the global electricity system was a succession of winning bids for solar and wind, in auctions around the world, according to the report. Records were set for solar power in Chile and onshore wind in Morocco.

Importance to travel & tourism

Travel & tourism is one of the world's major consumers of energy. The shift to renewables has been work-in-progress for many years but is now gaining momentum. Increased investment by the travel & tourism sector in this will certainly help the cause, save costs and be of enormous help to the environment.

SDG 7:
Renewable energy sources
could be cheaper than fossil
fuels within 10 years



Sustainable energy. Photo: World Bank/Dana Smillie

SDG 7: Renewable energy sources could be cheaper than fossil fuels within 10 years

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 3 April 2017 – A new United Nations-backed report has revealed overwhelming consensus that renewable power will dominate in the future, with many experts saying that even large international corporations are increasingly choosing renewable energy products either from utilities or through direct investment in their own generating capacity.

“[The report] is meant to spur discussion and debate about both the opportunities and challenges of achieving a 100 per cent renewable energy future by mid-century,” [said](#) Christine Lins, the Executive Secretary of Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21) – a global renewable energy policy multi-stakeholder network hosted by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)).

“Wishful thinking won’t get us there; only by fully understanding the challenges and engaging in informed debate about how to overcome them, can governments adopt the right policies and financial incentives to accelerate the pace of deployment,” she added.

At a press conference at UN Headquarters today, Ms. Lins said that 2016 was the third year in a row where the global economy continued to grow, by three per cent, but emissions related to the energy sector decreased. And that was mainly due to renewable energy and efficiency investment in China and in the United States.

“And so, we actually really see that renewables are, on the one hand making their way into the energy systems of many countries, but also we see that we have come a long way. We have a 20 per cent of the world’s final energy consumption nowadays coming from renewables,” she added.



*Christine Lins, Executive Secretary of Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21).
UN Photo/Evan Schneider*

The [Renewables Global Futures Report: Great debates towards 100 per cent renewable energy](#) also noted that more than 70 per cent of the experts expressed that a global transition to 100 per cent renewable energy is both feasible and realistic, with European and Australian experts most strongly supporting this view.

The report also found that similar number expected the cost of renewables to continue to fall, beating all fossil fuels within the next ten years.

Noting some challenges in achieving the 100 per cent transition, the report mentioned that in some regions, most notably Africa, the US and Japan, experts were sceptical about reaching that figure in their own countries or regions by 2050, largely due to the vested interests of the conventional energy industry. Also, the lack of long-term policy certainty and the absence of a stable climate for investment in energy efficiency and renewables hinder development in most countries, read the report.

“When REN21 was founded in 2004, the future of renewable energy looked very different than it does today,” noted Arthouros Zervos, the Chair of REN21, adding: “at that time, calls for 100 per cent renewable energy were not taken seriously, today the world’s leading energy experts are engaged in rational discussions about its feasibility, and in what time frame.”

The REN21 report is based on interviews with 114 renowned energy experts from all regions of the world. In addition to governments, REN21 also includes international organizations, industry associations, science and academia and the civil society, as well as UN agencies including the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Importance to travel & tourism

The broader geopolitical question raised by this shift towards renewables is what happens to countries that survive on exporting fossil fuels. Although they are all moving towards finding other sources of economic sustenance, the transition could be problematic, especially in countries with large populations.



SDG 8: **New International Day** **declared for small,** **medium-sized enterprises**



*A woman sells at her cosmetics shop and general store in Pakistan's Punjab province.
Photo: Visual News Associates/World Bank*

SDG 8: New International Day declared for small, medium-sized enterprises

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 6 April 2017 – Recognizing the importance of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises in achieving the new global development goals, the United Nations General Assembly today designated 27 June as International Day for those actors.

In a resolution adopted without a vote, the 193-member body also invited all stakeholders, including Member States, UN entities and civil society organizations, to observe the Day and raise public awareness of their contribution to the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, which the Assembly adopted in September 2015.

The resolution was introduced by the delegation of Argentina, with its representative stating that more than 95 per cent of enterprises in the world are micro-, small- and medium-sized and they account for about 60 per cent of private sector employment.

“These enterprises can in fact become the engines that sustain growth for long-term development in developing countries,” the representative said, thanking the contribution made by the International Council for Small Business (ICSB) to the creation of the Day.

ICSB held its 61st Annual World Conference here at United Nations in 2016, in which authorities from over 55 countries participated. In that occasion, ICSB made a declaration about the urgent need to have a day to recognize the important role of micro, small, and medium enterprises in the development of economies as a whole.

Importance to travel & tourism

Small and medium sized enterprises are the spinal cord of travel & tourism. From roadside food vendors to souvenir shops and suppliers of products and services to airlines, airports, convention centres, hotels and more, SMEs create millions of jobs and play a major role in meeting the broader goals of poverty alleviation and income distribution. Designating a special day to recognise the SMEs' contribution will allow the industry to underscore their importance and facilitate actions to help them survive and thrive in a highly competitive trading environment.



SDG 8:

Protectionist policies will reduce trade, and travel will follow



From left: WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo, World Bank President Jim Kim, IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde and CEO of the German Chambers of Commerce Martin Wansleben at the launch in Berlin of a study entitled “Making Trade an Engine of Growth for All.” Photo: WTO

SDG 8: Protectionist policies will reduce trade, and travel will follow

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 10 April 2017 – Trade and trade-related policies have a role to play not just in promoting growth and prosperity, but helping share that prosperity more widely, United Nations global finance partners said today, launching a [report](#) that calls on national governments to pursue policies that help those who might lose their jobs, one of the unintended consequences of trade integration.

Trade leads to productivity gains and significant benefits for consumers, especially the poor, but can also be responsible for job displacement that must be addressed through sound domestic policies that can help the unemployed get back on their feet, say economists from the World Trade Organization ([WTO](#)), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

“I recognize that there are very real concerns, but the answer is not to turn against trade, which would harm us all,” says the WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo.

Economists from the three global organizations reflect in the [report](#) on the latter part of the 20th century, arguing that trade integration helped drive economic growth in advanced and developing economies through greater productivity, increased competition resulting in higher living standards and more choices and better prices for consumers.

Looking back, “trade has had a very positive impact on the lives and livelihoods of many millions of people in recent decades,” says Mr. Azevêdo.

The report notes that job losses in certain sectors or regions in advanced economies have resulted to a large extent from technological changes rather than from trade.

According to Mr Azevêdo the “challenge before us is to support the workers of today and train the workers of tomorrow.”

The organizations call on national governments to pursue both “active” and “passive” labour market policies such as training programmes, job search assistance and wage insurance (a private insurance providing compensation if one is forced to move to a job with a lower salary) to facilitate reintegration of the unemployed back into the job market.

The organizations also call on governments to stabilize unemployed working families with short term passive labour market programmes, such as unemployment benefits and income support until those who have lost their jobs can get back to work.

Effective education and skills policies will be essential in preparing workers for the changing demands of the modern economy, they add.

The report also calls for further trade integration to strengthen global growth and advance an inclusive trading environment.

It stresses that traditional areas such as agriculture need further attention, while sectors such as services, as well as digital trade, represent areas where further trade reform can make a particularly strong contribution to growth.

Importance to travel & tourism

Trade is a natural partner of travel & tourism. Strong trade grows business travel and MICE events and activities. It creates jobs and drives economies, which in turn is good for leisure travel. Any drop in global trade has an immediate impact on all forms of travel, as well as travel expenditure. In this age of uncertainty and instability, the travel & tourism sector needs to carefully monitor shifts in global trade and the impact it could have on travel flows.



SDG 8:

Global trade to expand in spite of ‘deep’ geopolitical, economic uncertainty – WTO



World Trade Organization (WTO) Director-General Roberto Azevêdo announcing the WTO's trade growth projections at a press conference in Geneva. Photo: WTO

SDG 8: Global trade to expand in spite of ‘deep’ geopolitical, economic uncertainty – WTO

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 12 April 2017 – While forecasting that growth in the volume of global merchandise trade is expected to rebound this year from its weak performance in 2016, the World Trade Organization (WTO) today cautioned that “deep uncertainty” about near-term economic and policy developments in some countries raise the risk that trade activity could be stifled.

The WTO, which often cooperates with the United Nations on trade matters, forecast that global trade will expand by 2.4 per cent in 2017, but only if the global economy recovers as expected and governments pursue the right policy mix. Owing to this uncertainty, this figure is placed within a range of 1.8 per cent to 3.6 per cent. In 2018, the WTO is forecasting trade growth between 2.1 per cent and four per cent.

The unpredictable direction of the global economy in the near term and the lack of clarity about government action on monetary, fiscal and trade policies raises the risk that trade activity will be stifled. A spike in inflation leading to higher interest rates, tighter fiscal policies and the imposition of measures to curtail trade could all undermine higher trade growth over the next two years, said the WTO.

“Weak international trade growth in the last few years largely reflects continuing weakness in the global economy,” said WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo on the launch of the organization’s 2017-2018 forecasts, adding that trade has the potential to strengthen global growth if the movement of goods and supply of services across borders remains largely unfettered.

However, if policymakers attempt to address job losses at home with severe restrictions on imports, trade cannot help boost growth and may even constitute a drag on the recovery, he continued.

Picking up that thread in a press conference in Geneva, he said that overall, while there are some reasons for cautious optimism, trade growth remains fragile and there are considerable risks to the downside. Much of the uncertainty around the outlook is of course political — and not only geopolitical. Part of this is driven by people’s concerns about the impact that trade can have.

The fact is that trade plays a very beneficial role in the economy overall. It is net positive. It drives growth, job creation and development, he said, but stressed: “Nevertheless, people’s concerns cannot be ignored. A net gain for the economy as a whole — or for other individuals — means little to someone who has lost their job. But in finding the right response we have to look at the whole picture.”

Mr. Azevêdo said that the fact is that the economy is changing fast – driven by technology and innovation. Eight in 10 manufacturing jobs are lost to innovative technologies and higher productivity. It is estimated that 65 per cent of children entering primary school today will end up working in types of jobs that don’t yet exist.

Closing the borders to trade would only worsen the situation – it would not bring the jobs back, it would make more jobs disappear

“We have to adapt to this new reality. That means applying the right mix of policies across a range of areas. At the domestic level, policies are needed to help support the workers of today and train the workers of tomorrow,” he said, underscoring: Closing the borders to trade would only worsen the situation – it would not bring the jobs back, it would make more jobs disappear.”

He called for measures to keep using trade to deliver more benefits to more people. More trade integration can help make the system more inclusive – connecting new industries and smaller players to new markets.

Importance to travel & tourism

If geopolitical issues and economic uncertainties impact on global trade, the same holds true for global travel & tourism which comes under the “services” component of global trade. As governments move to shelter their local constituents from the vagaries of global trade challenges, the travel & tourism sector can learn a lot and perhaps adapt/adopt some of the policies.



SDG 9:

Bridging global infrastructure gap tops agenda at UN Partnership Forum



A technician releases water from the UNICEF supported source station that provides water to several villages in the region in Cyamabuye village in Myapihu district in northern Rwanda. Photo: UNICEF/ Noorani

SDG 9: Bridging global infrastructure gap tops agenda at UN Partnership Forum

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 5 April 2017 – Addressing the Partnership Forum convened by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), senior UN officials today discussed how to promote infrastructure growth in the least developed countries, particularly in Africa, to reach the world's development goals by 2030.

The theme of today's Forum is [Partnerships for promoting opportunities, increased prosperity and sustainable development for all](#). Since 2008, ECOSOC's Partnership Forum has brought together stakeholders, particularly from business and foundations, to discuss with governments ways in which to engage in support of the internationally agreed development goals.

In his welcoming remarks, ECOSOC President Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, noted that [infrastructure plays a vital role](#) in economic and social development of cities, regions and nations. He also highlighted the importance of public-private initiatives in developing resilient infrastructure.

In the context of achieving sustainable development, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), he said there is a valid case to be made for infrastructure development and industrialization, as well as bolstering broad, multi-stakeholder partnerships in that regard.

“It is only through working together that we will be able to fully face and deal with the complexities of today's development challenges which more often than not transcend borders in both their impacts and their solutions,” Mr. Shava said.

The geographic focus of today's discussions is on infrastructure development in the countries facing the largest infrastructure gaps, such as those in Africa, the least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDs).

“Not only does infrastructure improve access to agriculture, clean energy, education, water and sanitation, it also increases mobility, connects markets and helps create jobs,” Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said.

In a [video message](#), the Deputy-Secretary-General called for the promotion of “effective” partnerships that emphasize “innovation, impact, transparency, coherence, accountability and sustainability.”

She said that the international community has a “once-in-a-generation opportunity” for peace, prosperity and dignity on a healthy planet – the aims of the [2030 Agenda](#) – and “cannot afford to fail.”

Also speaking today, the President of the General Assembly, Peter Thomson, urged the international community to “let go of [old grievances and scepticism](#) and called for “new and inclusive ways of thinking, partnering, financing, and delivering on the ground.”

In the coming months, high-level events on SDG action will be held, including a financing lab on 18 April, an event on innovation and connectivity on 17 May, and on education on 28 June. The [Ocean Conference](#) will be held from 5-9 June.



Mrs. Mary Robinson, President, Mary Robinson Foundation-Climate Justice, addresses the audience. She was the first female President of Ireland from 1990 to 1997, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, from 1997 to 2002. UN Photo/ Manuel Elias

In her keynote address, Mary Robinson, who spoke on climate justice as the President of the Mary Robinson Foundation, called for removing silos between governments, civil society and the private sector.

“Uncontrolled climate change is incompatible with the eradication of poverty,” Mrs. Robinson said, underscoring the need for collective action. “And achievement of climate goals including access to sustainable energy for all is a driver of development.”

She called [climate justice](#) “the antithesis of the short termism that is today causing nations to choose protectionism over international cooperation.”

“Our future security and prosperity depends not on the strength of our borders or the size of our armies, but on the depth of our education systems and the extent of global access to water, food and electricity,” said Mrs. Robinson.

She noted, however, that not all action which is good for the planet is automatically good for people, and stressed the importance of human rights in all climate action actions.

Importance to travel & tourism

A powerful quote from Mary Robinson about the real path to security and prosperity. The objective of this UN meeting was to discuss infrastructure growth, but Ms Robinson is indirectly flagging a new definition for “infrastructure” and its real relevance to society. As building “infrastructure” is an expensive proposition, perhaps some re-routing of funds from expanding the “size of our armies” into upgrading the global access to education, water, food and electricity may be an issue worth raising in travel & tourism events.



SDG 9:

Lack of infrastructure, jobs drives rural youth to cities, says UN rural poverty agency



Farmers sort tomatoes in the Horn of African country Ethiopia. Photo: World Bank/Stephan Bachenheimer

SDG 9:

Lack of infrastructure, jobs drives rural youth to cities, says UN rural poverty agency

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 3 April 2017 – Investing in rural youth is essential to stem the migration of young people looking for work in cities and to keeping a global food supply, the new head of the United Nations agency charged with eradicating rural poverty today said.

In one of his [first interviews](#) since taking on the leadership of the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)), Gilbert Houngbo said he wants people to see life in rural areas as a choice and not a necessity.

“Food security and nutrition are essential, but we have to go beyond that and really aim at the fight against poverty and look at agriculture as a decent income-generating activity,” noted Mr. Houngbo, who was previously the Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)).

Without adequate investment in the world's most vulnerable communities, he continued, there will be increased instability and conflict and people will find it harder to bounce back from shocks, giving them more reasons to flee rural areas.

“We need to work on those hardships so that young people can be happy in a rural setting, instead of looking to go to the capital or move outside their country,” he said.

Mr. Houngbo – whose senior positions include serving as Prime Minister of Togo – understands first-hand the challenges of living in the countryside, according to IFAD. Mr. Houngbo grew up in rural Togo, and pledged to work through IFAD to aid young people living in rural poverty.

“When I was a youngster of eight years old, I had to walk four kilometres every morning to go and get water for the house, and a few years later I had to walk 20 kilometres every day to get to high school,” he said. “It is unacceptable that kids today have to go through the same thing 40 to 50 years later.”

Mr. Hougbo said his priority is to ensure that IFAD continues to have the resources to invest in rural areas so that they become “places of prosperity and hope, where people can build decent lives and not be compelled to migrate.”

Importance to travel & tourism

Agriculture is a first cousin of travel & tourism. Next to agriculture, no other economic sector offers more opportunities for rural youth than travel & tourism. In fact, young people who don’t want to migrate to the urban areas have enormous opportunities to remain in agriculture and also practise some agro-tourism by promoting visits to their farms, regardless of whether they are growing cash or food crops.

SDG 9:
**Pro-poor urbanization,
sustainable infrastructure can
unlock Asia-Pacific's prosperity**



A pump operator for Nusra works near solar panels. Nusra is an NGO working to bring solar irrigation to farmers and solar home systems to families in Rohertek, Bangladesh. Photo: Dominic Chavez/World Bank

SDG 9: Pro-poor urbanization, sustainable infrastructure can unlock Asia-Pacific's prosperity

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 29 March 2017 – Some 400 million people in Asia and the Pacific still confront poverty as part of their daily lives due to widening income inequality, despite the region's impressive gains in reducing poverty in recent decades, a United Nations-backed report has found.

“As outlined in the report, a renewed strengthening of the social contract is critical for addressing multi-dimensional poverty and the high marginalization and exclusion of people,” the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Shamshad Akhtar, told the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development ([APFSD 2017](#)), according to a [press release](#) from ESCAP.

Titled [Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing Asia-Pacific](#), the report notes that on top of the 400 million people, or one in 10, living in extreme poverty, more than one in four people in the region's developing countries experience poverty in multiple dimensions, including additional deprivations that impact their health, education, and standard of living.

The report underscores the importance of addressing poverty through pro-poor urbanization, effective management of rural-urban transitions, and investment in sustainable infrastructure.

Although people in extreme income poverty are more likely to live in rural areas, they are increasingly found in cities, therefore provision of high quality, low-carbon, and resilient infrastructure is essential.

“Asia's infrastructure needs are large and will only grow, with our recent report suggesting that the region will need \$1.7 trillion annually in climate-resilient

infrastructure investments,” said ADB’s Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, Bambang Susantono.

“How our region chooses to bridge the infrastructure gap will have profound global implications. Concerted efforts, as highlighted in the tripartite report, can help us cover the last mile for infrastructure towards inclusive and sustainable development,” he added.

Also addressing the forum was Haoliang Xu, UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific.

“As urbanization booms across Asia and the Pacific, its cities are powering innovation, economic growth, and prosperity, lifting many out of poverty. But there has also been an increase in inequality and exclusion in some regions,” he said.

“To be more inclusive and to leave no one behind, cities must adopt innovative policies that align with the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), and prioritize building the resilience of the most vulnerable groups,” he added.

ESCAP, ADB, and UNDP also launched a new [SDG Data Portal](#) today to provide up to date data on SDG indicators for governments and stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific, along with an [outlook assessment](#) on [SDGs](#) in the region.

[APFSD 2017](#) was held by ESCAP in Bangkok from 29 to 31 March 2017. The conclusions and recommendations at the forum will inform discussions of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the global level, to be convened in New York in July 2017.

Importance to travel & tourism

The SDG Data Portal launched by ESCAP, ADB and UNDP is a perfect fit with the UNWTO initiative on Measuring Sustainable Tourism. Together, they can actually show how travel & tourism is contributing to the achievement of the SDGs at the wider level. This opens the door for statisticians from all the respective organisations to give the entire effort an extra push forward and generate comprehensive, easy-to-read reports that can be referenced and used right across the Asia-Pacific region.



SDG 9: **ADB lending hits record high as infrastructure demand rises**



MANILA, PHILIPPINES (25 April 2017) ADB News release — The Asian Development Bank's (ADB) annual operations exceeded the \$30 billion mark for the first time in its 50-year history last year as regional demand for development finance and knowledge — particularly on infrastructure — continues to grow, according to the bank's [2016 Annual Report \(AR\)](#) released today.

SDG 9: ADB lending hits record high as infrastructure demand rises

ADB's total lending in 2016, including cofinancing, reached \$31.70 billion — an 18% increase from 2015, according to the annual report. The total include \$17.47 billion in approvals for loans and grants, \$169 million for technical assistance, and \$14.06 billion for cofinancing, which increased by a record 31% over 2015. Disbursements, a key indicator for successful project implementation, also reached a new high of \$12.26 billion in 2016.

Private sector operations reached \$2.5 billion for only the second time in ADB's history — a result reflecting ADB's long-term strategy to significantly boost support for private enterprise to create more high quality jobs and increase living standards across Asia and the Pacific. Apart from its own funds, ADB's private sector operations also generated a record \$5.84 billion in cofinancing — a \$1.2 billion increase from 2015 — which included \$238 million in official cofinancing to support nonsovereign operations.

These figures update the [provisional operations numbers](#) released by ADB in January.

"The increase in our development financing to Asia and the Pacific reflects our strong commitment to improving the lives of the people in the region," said ADB President Takehiko Nakao. "As ADB celebrates 50 years of providing development assistance, we will strive even harder to meet the changing needs of our developing member countries."

The 2016 AR reviews the significant economic transformation in Asia and the Pacific over the past 50 years, and the role played by ADB to support the region's development to improve people's lives. The report notes that while the region's economic growth and success in reducing poverty have exceeded the most optimistic forecasts, there remain significant challenges to be addressed.

“We cannot be complacent,” said President Nakao. “The fact remains there are still 330 million people living in absolute poverty across Asia and the Pacific. A lack of infrastructure continues to limit economic growth, inhibit poverty reduction, and restrict improvements to quality of life.”

ADB estimates that the region requires \$1.7 trillion a year to meet its infrastructure financing needs. There are other pressing challenges such as climate change, health, education, and gender equality. To help address these development needs, ADB has scaled up its operations and expanded its financing capacity through the merger of its Asian Development Fund (ADF) lending operations with the Ordinary Capital Resources (OCR) balance sheet, which became effective on 1 January this year. OCR equity almost tripled, from \$17.3 billion to \$48.1 billion, as \$30.8 billion of ADF loans and other assets were transferred from the ADF. The merger is expected to increase ADB’s annual loan and grant approvals by over 50% to more than \$20 billion by 2020.

ADB will also increase grant support to its poorest countries by 70% over the next 4 years, following the successful \$3.3 billion replenishment of the ADF in May 2016. Contributions from 32 donors, including an increase in pledges from emerging Asian economies, will allow ADB to double the minimum allocation for small countries, provide strengthened support for disaster risk management, and offer greater assistance for regional health security.

ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration. Established in 1966, ADB is celebrating 50 years of development partnership in the region. It is owned by 67 members—48 from the region.

Importance to travel & tourism

Perhaps the most relevant component of the ADB’s funding to travel & tourism is the transportation sector. Over 50 years, the ADB has channeled billions of dollars into roads, highways, bridges, railways, airports and seaports throughout Asia. Without that infrastructure, travel & tourism would never have been able to attain its phenomenal growth. The work done by the ADB in the Greater Mekong Subregion is a shining success story to the extent where the same development model is being promoted in South and Central Asia.

SDG 14:
First-ever World Ocean Festival
to be held 4-9 June



By absorbing much of the added heat trapped by atmospheric greenhouse gases, the oceans are delaying some of the impacts of climate change. Photo: WMO/Olga Khoroshunova

SDG 14: First-ever World Ocean Festival to be held 4-9 June

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 11 April 2017 – The United Nations will hold a major conference in June 2017 on the protection and sustainable use of the planet’s oceans. The inaugural World Ocean Festival will kick off the week-long event, with activists and enthusiasts taking to the streets – and waterways – of New York City to raise their voices to reverse the declining health of our oceans.

At a joint press briefing at UN Headquarters, Penny Abeywardena, the Commissioner of the (New York City) Mayor’s Office for International Affairs, joined Peter Thompson, President of the UN General Assembly, to announce the Festival which will be held on Sunday, 4 June, the day before the opening of [The Ocean Conference](#), which will run from 5 to 9 June.

The Festival, organized by the Global Brian Foundation, will galvanize people across the world to bring public attention to the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), specifically [Goal 14](#), on conservation and sustainable use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, “right here in New York City, a premier coastal city,” said Ms. Abeywardena.

“Through these gatherings, people will come together to catalyze specific steps we can take as a community to preserve our oceans and engage our citizens and in particular, our young people,” she said, adding that, with 520 miles (about 835 kilometres) of coastline, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio’s administration recognizes the need for cities to lead on protecting the planet from degradation through sustainable consumption and effective management of the world’s natural resources and mitigating the worst impacts of climate change.

For his part, Assembly President Thomson said New York City is a model not only in the United States but around the world of what cities can do in integrating the [SDGs](#) with their urban development planning, drawing attention to Mayor de Blasio's 'One NYC' initiative.

As for the Conference, he said "the ocean is in deep trouble," facing threats such as marine pollution; fishery subsidies at a time when fish stocks are collapsing; and degraded coastal ecosystems planet-wide. "The Ocean Conference is [a timely opportunity] to address these major woes humanity has put upon the ocean," he continued, adding that it also will provide an opportunity to think about the impacts of climate change.

"With ocean acidification, we're already seeing the effects of this; its serious business in Oregon and Washington state and its spreading around the world and is also serious business for the tropics, where because of rising temperatures life is leaving our waters because it is too hot," explained Mr. Thomson, noting that 40 per cent of the cause of rising sea levels is due to the fact that oceans are heating up.



And yet "all human problems have human solutions and that's what the Ocean Conference is about, working to find what the solutions are," he emphasized, noting that UN Member States are currently making good progress on the 'call to action' that would be agreed by the Conference. Further, in addition to a plenary, the Conference would also feature seven partnership dialogues focused on SDG 14.

Mr. Thomson went on to highlight the registry of voluntary commitments, to which the UN was urging all stakeholders and "everybody who gives a hoot about the ocean" to register to between now and the Conference "so that you stand and be counted in our call to action to reverse the cycle of decline in which the ocean has been caught." The roll of the media is important in all this, to get the word out about the state of the planet's oceans "but also that we're doing something about it."

Natalia Vega-Berry, founder of the Global Brain Foundation and Executive Producer of the World Ocean Festival said the event will aim to show world leaders gathering for the UN conference the urgency for taking action. "Our ocean is a connective tissue for the world's entire population. It makes planet Earth and us all one, as we are surrounded by shores. At the same time, our ocean is at great risk of pollution, overfishing, climate change and more."



While coastal cities and island nations feel the most pressing burden of such threats, she said that the Festival will aim to bring together all people who care deeply about the oceans' future to "raise their voices in support of the ocean and call on world leaders to take action to save it."

She said that while the Festival will be held in New York, other cities could also be inspired to organize their own events.

New York's festival will feature a first-of-its kind grand "ocean march," which will be a parade of sailing vessels around lower Manhattan and along 10 nautical miles of Manhattan and Brooklyn waterfront from the Hudson to the East River. The second main event will be the Ocean Village, which will be set up at Gentry State Park in Long Island City as a "hub for all things ocean," and will celebrate art, innovation and exhibits on ocean and climate action.

Importance to travel & tourism

As all forms of marine tourism are dependent on oceans, this Festival should attract the interest and participation of cruise companies, as well as all Asia-Pacific nations which have long coastlines and beach resorts such as Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, Maldives, the South Pacific islands and many more. The oceans keep atmospheric conditions in balance and sustain life, giving them much more than just recreational value. Seafood consumption by the travel & tourism industry is also a major source of livelihood for fishing communities worldwide.



SDG 14:

Guidelines on keeping illegally caught fish from global supply chains near 'finish line'



Fresh fish for sale at a market in Rome, Italy. Photo: FAO/Alessia Pierdomenico

SDG 14: Guidelines on keeping illegally caught fish from global supply chains near ‘finish line’

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 12 April 2017 – A push to establish internationally-agreed standards to keep illegally caught fish off store-shelves and consumers’ plates has taken an important step forward, the United Nations agricultural agency, said today as a measure aiming to create a “gold standard” for catch documentation nears the finish line.

“A set of draft Voluntary Guidelines on Catch Documentation Schemes was last week unanimously adopted by a FAO [technical consultation](#) that brought a five-year negotiation effort to a close, and are now poised for adoption by all UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) members at [its] upcoming bi-annual governing conference,” the agency said in a [news release](#).

Once approved by the Conference, which will take place in Rome from 3 to 8 July, the guidelines will act as an internationally-recognized “gold standard” reference for governments and businesses looking to establish systems that can trace fish from their point of capture through the entire supply chain, in other words from “sea-to-plate,” to stop illegally caught fish from entering the marketplace.

Globally, some 91-93 million tonnes of fish are captured each year, and seafood products are among the world’s most widely traded food commodities – with a \$142 billion export value in 2016.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is also estimated to strip as much as 26 million additional tonnes of fish from the oceans annually, damaging marine ecosystems and sabotaging efforts to sustainably manage fisheries.

Catch documentation schemes (CDS) offer a way to cut down on trade in illegal fish with basically ensuring that: fish shipments are certified by national authorities as being caught legally and in compliance with best practices; certified hard-copy documentation accompanies the fish through processing and marketing

nationally or internationally. Only fish with valid documentation can be exported or traded to markets where a CDS requirement exists.

Until recently, the few such schemes that had been established mainly focused on overexploited high-value species, such as Chilean Seabass harvested in Antarctic waters, or Atlantic and Southern Bluefin Tuna.

With seafood trade at record highs along with rising consumer demands, CDS could be more widely applied. Since 2010, the European Union has used a CDS that covers all imported fish shipments from overseas; and in 2016, the United States announced its own scheme.

One challenge facing broader use of CDS is logistically ensuring that a paper certificate safely makes it from a fishing port in one country to an inspection station in another. The new guidelines recommend that fish shipment information be recorded digitally for referencing at any point along the chain – reducing administrative burdens and cutting down on fraud opportunities.

The new guidelines also call for “user friendly” CDS that are relatively simple and can be adapted to different fisheries circumstances.

“CDS will only succeed if there is strong, international coordination,” explains Audun Lem, Deputy-Director of FAO’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Resources Division and current Secretary of FAO’s Sub-Committee on Fish Trade.

“Although they are voluntary, the process of negotiation that led to the new guidelines means they enjoy a high level of buy-in by governments, while endorsement at the FAO Conference will send a clear signal of commitment to adhere to them. So, going forward, new catch documentation schemes established at the national, regional or international level will be in sync, reducing barriers to their wider use,” he underscored.

Additionally, Mr. Lem added that because the guidelines call on countries to comply with existing international laws as well as World Trade Organization agreements, their developing CDS will allow countries to avoid unwanted trade disputes.

Importance to travel & tourism

Travel & tourism is a lavish consumer of seafood. But illegally caught fish poses the same dangers as trade in wildlife or smuggling of artefacts. This issue has not been thoroughly explored in travel & tourism. As seafood consumption in travel & tourism grows, especially by the emerging millions of Chinese tourists, so too will the level of threat to the oceans and marine life in general.



SDG 15:

First moves to enforce ban on ivory trade in China

SDG 15: First moves to enforce ban on ivory trade in China

United Nations, (UN News Centre) March 31, 2017 -- China today shut the door on many of its ivory factories and retail outlets, dramatically improving the survival prospects for elephants across the world.

The move, [announced by the State Forestry Administration](#), represents the first concrete steps in an “almost complete” ban on the domestic trade in ivory, announced last year and expected to be fully implemented by the end of 2017.



Photo Credit: Peter Pham

“This is an historic step and may well be a turning point in our fight to save elephants from extinction,” said Erik Solheim, Head of UN Environment. “We need more countries and territories to follow suit.”

The closures mean the end of business for [around one-third of officially sanctioned ivory-carvers and licensed retailers](#).

Since China is one of the world’s largest markets for the sale of ivory, where elephant tusks are used to make decorative objects and as traditional gifts or displays of wealth, what happens here is of immense importance for elephant conservation.

“The true measure of the success of these new rules will be how well they are enforced,” added Mr Solheim. “We will continue to work closely with the Chinese government to ensure a healthy natural legacy remains for our children and grandchildren.”

With 100,000 elephants killed in the last decade alone and [only around 500,000 left worldwide](#), bans like this cannot happen soon enough.

Campaigners have noted [a two-thirds fall in the price of ivory](#) since China signalled its intention to implement a ban last year, and lower prices mean fewer poachers. But it essential for more countries and territories to follow China’s example of saying no to ivory so that loopholes are closed.

Public awareness campaigns also continue to have a key role to play by reducing the demand for ivory products. UN Environment’s own [Wild for Life](#) campaign against the illegal trade in endangered wildlife has already reached more than 1 billion people around the world with over 4.5 million social media interactions and was voted one of the most influential campaigns of 2016 on Weibo, a leading Chinese social media platform, in 2016.

Legislation, enforcement and a change in public attitudes will not only protect wildlife but also benefit people who live in the countries where elephants, and other species impacted by illegal trade, are found. Since the illegal trade in ivory is known to facilitate corruption and fund the activities of criminal gangs, what's good the elephants is good for us, too.

Follow China's example, shut down ivory factories and shops, UN agency urges countries



Between 2010 and 2012, 100,000 elephants were killed for their ivory in Africa.

Photo: [UNEP GRID Arendal/Peter Prokosch](#)

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 3 April 2017 – Applauding the Chinese Government's closure of many of its ivory factories and retail outlets, the United Nations environment wing has called on other countries and territories to follow China's example and improve the survival prospects for elephants across the world.

The move, announced by the country's State Forestry Administration, represents the first concrete steps in an "almost complete" ban on the domestic trade in ivory. It was announced last year and expected to be fully implemented by the end of 2017.

"This is an historic step and may well be a turning point in our fight to save elephants from extinction," the Executive Director of UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), Erik Solheim, said in a [news release](#) issued late last week.

"The true measure of the success of these new rules will be how well they are enforced," he added.

According to UNEP, the closures on 31 March represent the end of business for around one-third of officially sanctioned ivory-carvers and licensed retailers in one of the world's largest markets for the sale of ivory, where elephant tusks are used to make decorative objects and as traditional gifts or displays of wealth.

With 100,000 elephants killed in the last decade alone and only around 500,000 left worldwide, bans like this cannot happen soon enough.

Mr. Solheim also pledged to work closely with the Chinese government to ensure a healthy natural legacy remains for the world's children and grandchildren.

Also, following the announcement of the ban, ivory prices have fallen by almost two-thirds and public awareness campaigns have played a key role in reducing the demand. These mean that the killing of elephants for their tusks and illicit trade of the ivory is not as lucrative as it once was.

Such legislation, enforcement and a change in public attitudes will not only protect wildlife but also benefit people who live in the countries where elephants are found.

Furthermore, combatting illegal trade in ivory helps the fight against corruption as well as helps curb the funding that finance the activities of criminal gangs.

What's good for the elephants is good for everyone.

Importance to travel & tourism

Robust demand by the travel & tourism sector has worsened this problem over the years. It is actually a major example of the “dark side” of tourism that deserves forceful action. Many other such illegal activities thrive due to demand by foreign visitors and need to be curbed via a combination of name-and-shame awareness campaigns and more rigorous law enforcement action.

SDG 16:
Malala Yousafzai designated
youngest-ever UN Messenger
of Peace



Secretary-General António Guterres designates children's rights activist and Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai as a UN Messenger of Peace. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

SDG 16: Malala Yousafzai designated youngest-ever UN Messenger of Peace

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 10 April 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today designated children's rights activist and Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai as a UN Messenger of Peace with a special focus on girls' education.

"You have been to the most difficult places [...] visited several refugee camps. Your foundation has schools in Lebanon, in the Beka'a Valley," said Mr. Guterres at a ceremony in the Trusteeship Council chamber at UN Headquarters, in New York.

"[You are a] symbol of perhaps the most important thing in the world, education for all," he highlighted. Ms. Yousafzai, who was shot in 2012 by the Taliban for attending classes, is the youngest-ever UN Messenger of Peace and the first one to be designated by Secretary-General Guterres since he assumed office in January this year.

Accepting the accolade, Ms. Yousafzai underscored the importance of education, especially education of girls, for advancing communities and societies.

"[Bringing change] starts with us and it should start now," she said, adding: "If you want to see your future bright, you have to start working now [and] not wait for anyone else."

[UN Messengers of Peace](#) are distinguished individuals, carefully selected from the fields of art, literature, science, entertainment, sports or other fields of public life, who have agreed to help focus worldwide attention on the work of the global Organization.

Backed by the highest honour bestowed by the Secretary-General on a global citizen, these prominent personalities volunteer their time, talent and passion to raise awareness of UN's efforts to improve the lives of billions of people everywhere.

Following the official presentation, Secretary-General Guterres and Ms. Yousafzai conversed with youth representatives from around the world on the theme of girls' education.

Taking a question from a young speaker in the audience, Ms. Yousafzai said the most difficult time she faced had been from 2007 to 2009 in the Swat Valley, "because we were at a point of making a decision about whether to speak out or remain silent. And I realized that if you remain silent, you are still going to be terrorized. So speaking out, you can help people."

While recovering from the Taliban attack, she realized that "extremists tried everything to stop me [and the fact that they didn't] is clear evidence that no one can stop me. I have second life for the purpose of [pressing for] education and I'll continue working on [this issue].

Ms. Yousafzai went on to say that brothers and fathers must also support women and girls in the global effort to ensure education for all and, more importantly, to "be who they want to be." Indeed, she said that her father always told people not to ask him what he did for Malala, 'but ask what I didn't do – I didn't clip her wings.'

Summing up the conversation, Mr. Guterres called Ms. Yousafzai's life "a remarkable example of solidarity." Yet, he said, Pakistan is also such an example. "We live in a world where so many borders are closed; so many doors are closed, but Pakistan has received seven million refugees with open borders, open doors and hearts – a symbol of generosity."

He hoped this spirit could serve as an example that "it is not by closing doors that we will all be able to move forward."

Importance to travel & tourism

Travel & tourism prides itself on being an "Industry of Peace." This is a good example for travel & tourism to follow in creating its own Messengers of Peace who can speak out boldly against all those who would disrupt the peace. The UNWTO has recently appointed Ambassadors to promote the message of sustainability. Tourism Ambassadors of peace could be a logical counterpart.

The Olive tree

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