



THE OLIVE TREE

Edition 2. July - August 2017

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

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THE OLIVE TREE

Design & Layout: **Nusreen Ekachon**



MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE EDITOR IMTIAZ MUQBIL

Welcome to Edition II of The Olive Tree, the only global publication designed to promote a better understanding of the two-way interlinkage between travel & tourism and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The second edition of this landmark publication contains a number of stories of enormous interest. The most important is the start of the UN countdown to Sept 21, International Day of Peace.

The Day of Peace and World Tourism Day, marked on 27 September, are only a week apart. That opens up enormous opportunities for holding an entire week of back-to-back activities to promote the deep connectivity between travel & tourism and its most fundamental pre-requisite, global peace and stability.

No such event has ever been held and, given the precarious, disruptive state of a world in transition, this might be a good time to start.

Other stories in this edition of The Olive Tree highlight statistics that flag the sense of urgency:

- (+) The Global Population Report shows that roughly 83 million people are being added to the planet annually.
- (+) Each year, about one-third of the food we produce globally is lost or wasted.
- (+) Over one billion people in the world live with some form of disability.
- (+) The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) estimates that total aid to education has fallen, and is now 4% below 2010 levels.
- (+) By 2030, almost 70 million children will die before reaching their fifth birthday.
- (+) If all adults completed secondary education, 420 million could be lifted out of poverty by 2030.
- (+) Reducing gender disparities at workplaces by 25% by 2025 could inject nearly \$5.8 trillion into the global economy.
- (+) While 70 million youth are unemployed, an additional 150 million work yet live in moderate to extreme poverty.
- (+) Environmental risk factors are responsible for around 26% of ischemic heart disease, 25% of strokes and 17% of cancers in Europe.
- (+) Extremely high temperatures in May and June 2017 have broken records in parts of Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and the United States.

These are all sobering statistics. In a world awash with "Big Data", they also provide a hard-reality check of numbers that matter far beyond the commercial obsession with RoI and yields.

Indeed, travel & tourism can play a major role in alleviating all of them, thus contributing positively to making the world a better place, the over-arching mission statement espoused by UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

This publication is designed to do exactly that.

I would like to thank both Jetwing Hotels chairman Hiran Cooray and PATA CEO Mario Hardy for supporting this pioneering publication.

Readers' comments and feedback are welcome.

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LEAD STORY:

Measuring Sustainable Tourism – What Next?

Manila – The 6th UNWTO International Conference on Tourism Statistics: Measuring Sustainable Tourism on 21-24 June 2017 has issued a “Call to Action” for the development of a Statistical Framework that will measure the impact of travel & tourism “beyond (its) economic focus, to incorporate environmental, social and cultural dimensions” and be comparable across countries and regions.



6th UNWTO International Conference on Tourism Statistics: **Measuring Sustainable Tourism**

Manila, Philippines, June 21-24, 2017

Data gathering methodology and criteria have been worked out that will allow the global tourism industry to account for usage of water and energy, GHG emissions and solid waste generation. It will also estimate the tourism share of environmental flows, including those associated with transport activity, and provide for an accounting of environmental assets such as water resources, wildlife and key species, land usage and tourism related ecosystems.

However, publication of these ecological-impact estimates will expose the industry’s soft underbelly and dilute the lofty figures that have been bandied around since the 1990s to highlight the economic impact of tourism. It will also open the travel & tourism industry to more criticism by civil society activists, and raise questions about why it has taken so long to come up with an MST.

The Manila conference brought together representatives of tourism, economic, environmental and other related administrations, statistical institutes, international and regional organizations, the private sector, the academia and civil society. The event was also intended to mark the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017.

In their Call to Action, the groups acknowledged that sustainable tourism contributes to the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – and to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They noted that tourism has become one of the fastest growing and most important economic sectors in the world, benefiting destinations and communities worldwide. With over 1.2 billion international overnight visitors and many more domestic visitors in 2016, the sector represents 10% of the world’s GDP and accounts for 1 in 10 jobs globally.

However, the Call to Action stresses, “This growth comes with the need to uphold the foundations of prosperity for tourism destinations: the rich natural resources of our planet and its diverse cultural heritage.”

Although travel & tourism has created a “satellite accounting system” to measure the economic impact of travel & tourism since the 1990s, it has never issued a similar accounting system to simultaneously measure the ecological impact.

Today, with climate change and global warming taking centre stage, the need to measure the environmental and ecological impact of the growing billions of international and domestic visitors is gaining ground.

The Framework is designed to improve the industry’s ability to address vital and urgent policy questions on sustainable tourism, such as:

- (+) How can the use of energy, water and other resources be optimized?
- (+) What are the trends in land use (including water and coastal areas) for tourism purposes?
- (+) What is the waste water and solid waste resulting from tourism activity and how is it dealt with?
- (+) How does tourism contribute to employment opportunities?
- (+) What is the impact of visitors on cultural and heritage sites and how do they affect their preservation?
- (+) How do local communities benefit from tourism and how are they impacted by it?
- (+) What activities are being undertaken by tourism industries to maintain protected areas and other natural features (national parks, beaches) in good condition?
- (+) How does the environmental performance of tourism sector compare to other sectors?

The Manila conference featured numerous presentations by tourism ministers, statistical and research experts. All the presentations and video broadcasts of the panel discussions can be found by [clicking on this link](#).

A summary of the conference highlights by Mr. Tadayuki Hara, Associate Professor, University of Central Florida, can be found by [clicking on this link](#).

According to the Call to Action, “Sustainable tourism is defined 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. Sustainable tourism should thus make optimal use of environmental resources, respect host communities and ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing benefits that are distributed fairly among all stakeholders.

On the positive side, there is recognition that “sustainable tourism drives inclusive economic growth and social development by promoting entrepreneurship, creating jobs and fighting poverty, and can also encourage environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation, and stronger peace and mutual understanding around the world.”

At the same time, “the need to better understand and track progress towards a sustainable global tourism sector is more pressing than ever.”

This means “that credible and comprehensive data on sustainable tourism is key for effective, evidence-based policies and management.”

Two official UN statistical standards for measuring tourism were adopted in 2008: the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 and the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008. They enable countries to produce data that is credible and comparable – across countries, over time and in concert with other standards-based data.

Hence, the Manila conference agreed that “developing and implementing a MST Framework is the critical next step in supporting universal, cross-sectorial, sustainable tourism policies and practices.” This will help decision makers and other stakeholders by a common language for discussing sustainable tourism within the tourism sector and with other key policy areas such as planning, industry, infrastructure, environment, social affairs, finance and central banks;

It will also be possible to compare the performance of the tourism sector and the impacts of different policies on a consistent basis with other sectors and in different destinations and countries.

A preliminary draft of the MST Framework has been agreed “as a launch pad with which to further the global discussion.” It is to be presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission for its consideration in the UN Statistical Commission’s fifty-first session, to be held in 2020.

The Call to Action “emphasizes that, beyond being a technical exercise, the development and implementation of an MST Framework is a strategic and ongoing endeavour, requiring stakeholder engagement, inter-institutional coordination and political leadership.”

Other important documents presented at the Manila conference:

- UNWTO: “Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism” ([doc](#)) ([ppt](#))
- Mr. Peter Laimer, Deputy Director for Spatial Statistics, Statistics Austria and Chair of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA: “Tourism Indicators for Monitoring the SDGs” ([summary](#)) ([doc](#)) ([ppt](#))
- UNWTO: “Linking TSA and SEEA: A Technical Note” ([summary](#)) ([doc](#)) ([ppt](#))



SDG 1: World population to hit 9.8 billion by 2050



A view of passengers aboard trains connecting the suburbs of Kolkata, India. UN Photo/Kibae Park.



SDG 1: World population to hit 9.8 billion by 2050

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 21 June 2017 – The world population is now nearly 7.6 billion, up from 7.4 billion in 2015, spurred by the relatively high levels of fertility in developing countries – despite an overall drop in the number of children people have around the globe – the United Nations today reported.

The concentration of global population growth is in the poorest countries, according to [World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision](#), presenting a challenge as the international community seeks to implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which seeks to end poverty and preserve the planet.

“With roughly [83 million people being added to the world’s population](#) every year, the upward trend in population size is expected to continue, even assuming that fertility levels will continue to decline,” said the report’s authors at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

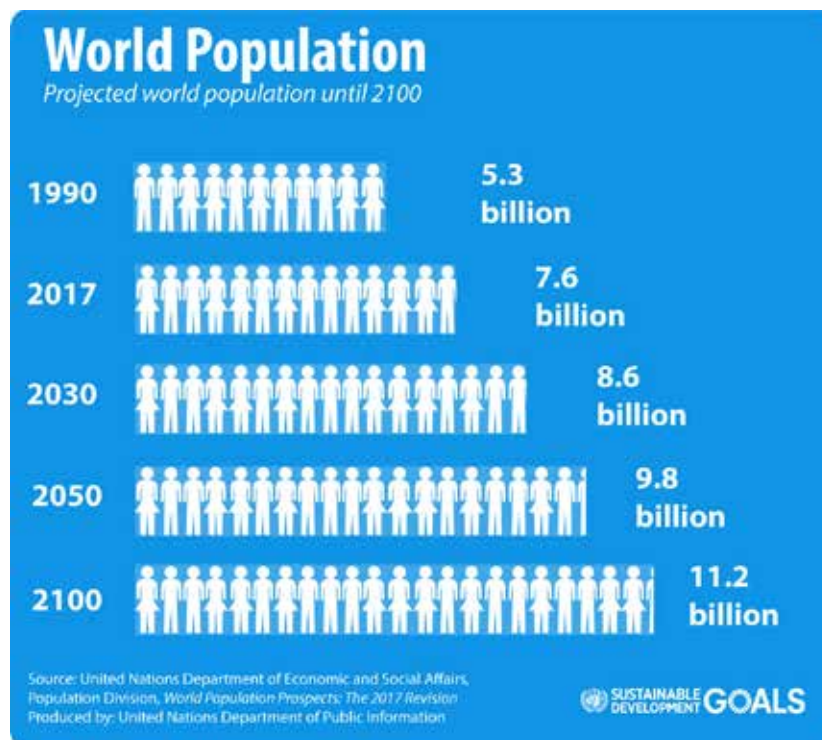
At this rate, the world population is expected to reach 8.6 billion in 2030, 9.8 billion in 2050 and surpass 11.2 billion in 2100.

The growth is expected to come, in part, from the 47 least developed countries, where the fertility rate is around 4.3 births per woman, and whose population is expected to reach 1.9 billion people in 2050 from the current estimate of one billion.

In addition, the populations in 26 African countries are likely to “at least double” by 2050, according to the report.

That trend comes despite lower fertility rates in nearly all regions of the world, including in Africa, where rates fell from 5.1 births per woman from 2000-2005 to 4.7 births from 2010-2015.

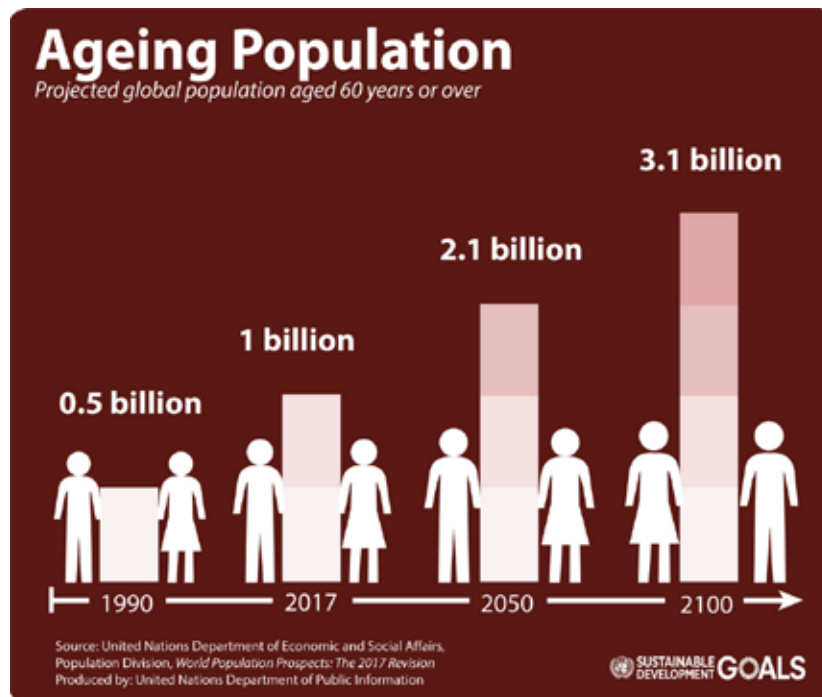
World Population



Global Fertility Rate



Ageing Population



In contrast, the birth rate in Europe was 1.6 births per woman in 2010-2015, up from 1.4 births in 2010-2015.

“During 2010-2015, fertility was below the replacement level in 83 countries comprising 46 per cent of the world’s population,” according to the report.

The lower fertility rates are resulting in an ageing population, with the number of people aged 60 or over expected to more than double by 2050 and triple by 2100, from the current 962 million to 3.1 billion.

Africa, which has the youngest age distribution of any region, is projected to experience a rapid ageing of its population, the report noted.

“Although the African population will remain relatively young for several more decades, the percentage of its population aged 60 or over is expected to rise from five per cent in 2017 to around nine per cent in 2050, and then to nearly 20 per cent by the end of the century,” the authors wrote.

In terms of other population trends depicted in the report, the population of India, which currently ranks as the second most populous country with 1.3 billion inhabitants, will surpass China’s 1.4 billion citizens, by 2024.

By 2050, the third most populous country will be Nigeria, which currently ranks seventh, and which is poised to replace the United States.

The report also noted the impacts of the flows of migrants and refugees between countries, in particular noting the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis and the estimated outflow of 4.2 million people in 2010-2015. In terms of migration, “although international migration at or around current levels will be insufficient to compensate fully for the expected loss of population tied to low levels of fertility, especially in the European region, the movement of people between countries can help attenuate some of the adverse consequences of population ageing,” the authors wrote.

Importance to travel & tourism

This is a phenomenal report which clearly shows the gargantuan challenge facing future generations. If travel & tourism is to make the world a better place, its biggest challenge will be to ensure that the Planet has enough resources to feed, clothe and shelter the emerging billions and that prevailing geopolitical, economic, social, cultural and environmental management systems are sustainable and peaceful. How to make this possible should be the over-arching theme of every travel & tourism event in the years to come.



SDG 1: Sharp rise in money migrants send home lifts millions out of poverty



Migrant workers from sub-Saharan Africa sit by the sea in Benghazi, eastern Libya (Source: IFAD)



SDG 1: Sharp rise in money migrants send home lifts millions out of poverty

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 14 June 2017 – A dramatic uptick in the amount of money migrants send home to their families in developing countries is helping to lift millions out of poverty, according to a new report out today from the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)).

The first-ever study, [Sending Money Home: Contributing to the SDGs](#), One Family at a Time, highlights the role these funds – more than \$445 million in 2016 – play in helping development countries attain the UN Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

“About 40 per cent of remittances – \$200 billion – are [sent to rural areas](#) where the majority of poor people live,” said Pedro de Vasconcelos, manager of IFAD’s Financing Facility for Remittances and lead author of the report, which notes that over the past decade, remittances have risen by 51 per cent – far greater than the 28 per cent increase in migration from these countries.

“This money is spent on food, health care, better educational opportunities and improved housing and sanitation. Remittances are therefore critical to help developing countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,” underscored Mr. de Vasconcelos.

Sending Money Home covers a 10-year trend in migration and remittance flows from 2007-2016. While the report shows that there have been increases in sending patterns most regions of the world, the sharp rise over the past decade is in large part due to Asia which has witnessed an 87 per cent increase in remittances.

Despite the decade-long trend, IFAD President Gilbert F. Hounbo noted the impact of remittances must first be viewed one family at a time.

“It is not about the money being sent home, it is about the impact on people’s lives. The small amounts of \$200 or \$300 that each migrant sends home make up about 60 per cent of the family’s household income, and this makes an enormous difference in their lives and the communities in which they live,” said Mr. Hounngbo.

Currently, about 200 million migrant workers support some 800 million family members globally. This year, and expected one-in-seven people globally will be involved in either sending or receiving more than \$450 billion in remittances, according to the report.

Migration flows and remittances are having large-scale impacts on the global economy and political landscape. Total migrant earnings are estimated at \$3 trillion annually, approximately 85 per cent of which remains in the host countries. The money sent home averages less than one per cent of their host’s GDP.

Taken together, these individual remittances account for more than three times the combined official development assistance (ODA) from all

sources, and more than the total foreign direct investment to almost every low- and middle-income country.

Transaction costs to send remittances currently exceed \$30 billion annually, with fees particularly high to the poorest countries and remote rural areas. The report makes several recommendations for improving public policies and outlines proposals for partnerships with the private sector to reduce costs and create opportunities for migrants and their families to use their money more productively.

“As populations in developed countries continue to age, the demand for migrant labour is expected to keep growing in the coming years,” pointed out Mr. de Vasconcelos. “However, remittances can help the families of migrants build a more secure future, making migration for young people more of a choice than a necessity,” he added.

Importance to travel & tourism

As a major employer of migrants, travel & tourism is an important contributor to the global flow of remittances. This report raises the possibility of doing a more detailed study highlighting just this contribution. The findings should go a long way towards bolstering the economic importance of travel & tourism.



SDG 2: 9 tips for reducing food waste and becoming a #ZeroHunger hero

Not wasting for a #ZeroHunger world



SDG 2: 9 tips for reducing food waste and becoming a #ZeroHunger hero

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 26 May 2017 - Food waste has become a dangerous habit: buying more than we need at supermarkets, letting fruits and vegetables spoil at home or ordering more than we can eat at restaurants.

Each year, about 1/3 of the food we produce globally is lost or wasted. In developing countries, a large part of this food (40%) is lost at the harvest or processing stage. This is called **food loss**. In developed countries, this same percentage (40%) is lost at the consumer or retail stage, throwing away food that is not bought at stores or food that is not eaten at home, restaurants and cafeterias. This is called **food waste**.

There is a lot of room for improvement worldwide in relation to food loss and waste.

We have formed habits that hurt our world and put extra strain on our natural resources. When we waste food, we waste the labour, money and precious resources (like seeds, water, feed, etc.) that go into making the food, not to mention the resources that go into transporting it. In short, wasting food increases greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to climate change.

But habits can change. Here are some easy things you can do to be a #ZeroHunger hero and make not wasting a way of life:

- **Start small** – Take smaller portions at home or share large dishes at restaurants.
- **Leave nothing behind** – Keep your leftovers for another meal or use them in a different dish.
- **Buy only what you need** – Be smart with your shopping. Make a list of what you need and stick to it. Don't buy more than you can use.
- **Don't be prejudiced** - Buy “ugly” or irregularly shaped fruits and vegetables that are just as good but look a little different.
- **Check your fridge** – Store food between 1 and 5 degrees Celsius for maximum freshness and shelf-life.
- **First in, first out** – Try using produce that you had bought previously and, when you stack up your fridge and cupboards, move older products to the front and place newer ones in the back.
- **Understand dates** - “Use by” indicates a date by which the food is safe to be eaten, while “best before” means the food's quality is best prior to that date, but it is still safe for consumption after it. Another date mark that you can find on food packages is the “Sell by” date, which is helpful for stock rotation by manufacturers and retailers.
- **Compost** – Some food waste might be unavoidable, so why not set up a compost bin!
- **Donate the surplus** – Sharing is caring.

This video will change the way you see food. <https://youtu.be/7SqLz4O32vc>
#ZeroHunger starts with you.

Importance to travel & tourism

If hard statistics were available, they may prove that the level of food wastage in the travel & tourism sector is well above average. This is another opportunity waiting to be tapped amongst the emerging generation of millennials and their start-up ventures. Surely, technological solutions can be developed to mitigate this.



SDG 2 : Rising shipping costs set to take global food import bill past \$1.3 trillion



Photo: World Bank/Dana Smillie



SDG 2 : Rising shipping costs set to take global food import bill past \$1.3 trillion

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 8 June 2017 – Despite balanced global food commodity markets, shipping costs and import volumes will lift worldwide import costs to over \$1.3 trillion this year, according to the latest report from the United Nations agriculture agency.

“Global food commodity markets are well-balanced, buoyed by ample supplies of wheat and maize and rebounding production of oilseed products. However, rising shipping costs and larger import volumes are set to lift the global food import bill to more than \$1.3 trillion this year, a 10.6 percent increase from 2016,” [said](#) the Food and Agricultural Organization ([FAO](#)) today in its biannual publication entitled [Food Outlook](#).

The report went on to explain that food import bills of least-developed countries, low-income food deficit countries and countries in sub-Saharan Africa are on course to rise even faster due to higher import volumes of meat, sugar, dairy and oilseed products.

Rising import bills are forecast for all food categories except for fish, for which growing domestic market demand in many developing countries is being increasingly met by robust growth in their local aquaculture sectors.

According to the report, “global food commodity prices rose for the first time in three months in May, with the [FAO Food Price Index](#) – also released today – averaging 172.6 points during the month, 2.2 per cent higher than in April and some 10 per cent higher than May 2016.”

FAO’s Food Price Index is a trade-weighted index tracking international market prices of five major food commodity groups: cereals, vegetable oils, dairy, meat and sugar. Rising prices were reported in May for all of those groups except sugar.

Buoyant supplies loom for most food commodities

The Food Outlook offers fresh market forecasts of major food commodities, all of which appear well-supplied on a global level – even if there may be regional or national divergences.

“International prices of wheat should remain stable, especially during the first half of the season, while near-record production of coarse grains will likely keep competition intense among the major exporters. Rice supplies are also forecast to remain ample, although reserves may decline as some exporters reduce their public stockpiles,” according to the report.

Due mostly to outstanding yield levels for soybean, oilseed production worldwide is expected to leap to an all-time high in 2016-17 – allowing further replenishments of global stocks. First indications point to a well-supplied market also in 2017-18, further weighing on prices.

The report said growth in world meat production is expected to stagnate for the third year in a row, due mainly to an anticipated decline in China, which is

expected to ramp up imports from the United States and Brazil.

Meanwhile, global milk output is expected to grow by 1.4 per cent in 2017, led by a rapid expansion in India.

For its part, FAO’s latest Cereal Supply and Demand Brief, also released today, anticipates a 2.2 per cent contraction in worldwide wheat production year-on-year, nearly offset by a 1.4 per cent expansion in global maize output – led by South America and Southern Africa – and a 0.7 per cent increase in world rice production.

While aggregate global cereal output is now forecast to decline by .5 per cent to 2,594 million tons, FAO also trimmed its May forecast for global cereal utilization to 2,584 million tons.

Importance to travel & tourism

Where would the travel & tourism sector be without its first cousin, agriculture? If food costs go up, so do the costs of a holiday. This report shows the economic interlinkage between travel & tourism, shipping and food costs, which by and large is not well understood enough.



SDG 3: Experts urge support for most marginalized Persons with Disabilities



Karima suffered an above-elbow amputation since an early age. With the prosthesis, Karima is now employed with the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union. Photo: OCHA/ Ghazza



SDG 3: Experts urge support for most marginalized Persons with Disabilities

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 13 June 2017 – As the largest and most diverse international disability meeting in the world kicks off at the United Nations in New York, leading experts in the field are calling for greater recognition of a range of human rights and fundamental freedoms for persons with disabilities while focusing on helping the most vulnerable among them.

“This conference needs to achieve a clear understanding on how to reach the most vulnerable among disabled persons, those who are affected by humanitarian crises and natural disasters and military conflicts,” says Theresia Degener, Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“Most often [the most vulnerable among disabled persons] are disabled women and disabled girls. And if we do not tackle multiple discrimination, we don’t reach these most vulnerable groups of persons with disabilities,” she added in an interview with UN News ahead of the 10th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The Conference of States Parties is held each year to exchange experience and ideas for implementation of the Convention, which was adopted in December 2006 with the aim of promoting full equality and participation of persons with disabilities in society. There are currently 173 countries that have joined the Convention, making it one of the most widely ratified international human rights instruments.

Over one billion people in the world live with some form of disability. Persons with disabilities continue to be subject to stereotypes, prejudices, harmful practices and stigma.

“It is important to acknowledge that since the adoption of the Convention, 11 years ago, a lot of things are changing around the world,” Catalina Devandas Aguilar, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, told UN News.

“We are seeing more accessibility, so it is easier for persons that use wheelchairs to move around. It is easier to have access to services, and that is fantastic.”



Catalina Devandas Aguilar, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is in New York to attend the tenth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UN Photo/Alban Mendes de Leon

Referring to her own day-to-day life, she defines the city in which she is based – Geneva, Switzerland – as fully accessible. Public transportation provides her with access to any place she wants to go, enabling her to benefit from all services that are available in her community. “I did not have that kind of access when I was little growing up in Costa Rica,” she says, recalling her childhood.

Ms. Degener also noted the progress made in recent years. “We can see that many countries have changed their laws, especially in respect to guardianship laws, mental health laws and voting laws.”

As a result, she added, “persons with disabilities have achieved more access to the election process and have achieved more freedom.”

Both women acknowledged that while progress has been made in a number of areas, several challenges still remain.

Support for women and girls with disabilities

One of the areas that requiring greater attention is creating the conditions that would enable women to work, given that the employment rate for women with disabilities is much lower than that for men. In this regard, Ms. Devandas called on all parties to step up efforts in this area, saying that “urgent action is needed.”

“There is very little attention [paid] to the dramatic situation that women with disabilities as well as girls with disabilities face in their daily lives. Not only in regards to employment, in regards to violence and in regards to education. You can add and add, because multiple layers of discrimination apply to women with disabilities.”

“To change that, we need to increase the awareness and put more effort into recognizing the support that women with disabilities need to exercise their rights,” she stated.

She went on to say: “When we are talking about the rights of persons with disabilities, we are not talking a man in a wheelchair. We are talking about a very diverse group of people. And we need very diverse solutions. We cannot forget that to talk about inclusion, we need to be inclusive ourselves.”



Theresia Degener, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UN Photo/ Kim Haughton

The Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, States adopted the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), the universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Ms. Degener noted that there is much in common between the Convention and the 17 Goals.

“Most of the rights enshrined in the Convention are also found in the Sustainable Development Goals. Whereas the Millennium Development Goals did not include disabled people, the [SDGs](#) do that now. Disability is mainstreamed.

“So, by trying to implement the SDGs, States Parties try to implement the purpose of the CRPD.”

She continued: “Also, we need to remember that a fifth of very poor populations in the world, those who live on less than a dollar a day, are made up of disabled people and their families. So when States Parties work towards eradication of poverty of disabled people they also implement the Convention by ensuring that disabled people can live a life which that has an adequate standard of living.”

With the start of the second decade of the Convention, Ms. Devandas cited two areas where advancement would be particularly beneficial. “The first one is if social protection policies are fully inclusive of persons with disabilities. The second one is to guarantee that support networks will be available for persons with disabilities.

“This means that persons with disabilities will be covered by universal health coverage, that we will have access to pensions, will have access to a specific benefit to support income, but also to recognize that we have additional costs for participation.

“At the same time, there should be this acknowledgement that support needs to be provided,” stressed Ms. Devandas. “In our societies everyone is supported. We do not notice anymore. We live in a world that is designed to support able-bodied people, but persons with disabilities as part of diversity also need support, and their support is different.

“We need to make sure that personal assistant devices and technology is provided to persons with disabilities so that we can fully participate on an equal basis with others. I think that if we have those things, it will make a dramatic difference in the lives of persons living with disabilities.”

Importance to travel & tourism

One of the most important contributions travel & tourism can make to the fulfillment of the UN SDGs is to pay more attention to helping Persons with Disabilities as visitors, guests and potential employees. It’s a wide open opportunity for start-up ventures to come up with creative ideas on how to enhance the quality of life for PwDs.



SDG 3: 'Sea change' needed to end gross neglect in mental health care



A young man, 17 is part of a “national reintegration strategy” in Burundi. At this re-education centre the children are provided help including access to social workers and psychologists. Credit: UNICEF/Prinsloo



SDG 3: Experts urge support for most marginalized Persons with Disabilities

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 6 June 2017 – Citing decades of neglect in mental health care, a United Nations human rights expert today denounced “biomedical gatekeepers” who perpetuate stigma and urged States and psychiatrists to act with courage to reform a “crisis-hit system built on outdated attitudes.”

“We need little short of [a revolution in mental health care](#) to end decades of neglect, abuse and violence,” Dainius Pūras, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health said after presenting his latest [report](#) to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The UN expert reported that right violations affect often the socially challenged groups including persons with intellectual, cognitive and psychosocial disabilities. He also stressed that people of all ages, when they have mental health needs, too often suffer from either an absence of care and support or from services that are ineffective and harmful.

Mr. Pūras suggested moving away from traditional practices and thinking, and enabling a long overdue shift to a rights-based approach.

“Where mental health systems exist, they are segregated from other healthcare and based on outdated practices that violate human rights,” he noted, underscoring that mental health policies and services are in crisis – not a crisis of chemical imbalances, but of power imbalances – and called for bold political commitments, urgent policy responses and immediate remedial action.

Turning to the underlying causes of these imbalances delaying the transition to rights-based care, he said that the dominance of the biomedical model, with its overdependence on medication, and the “biased” use of evidence, contaminates knowledge about mental health.

“There is now unequivocal evidence of the failures of a system that relies too heavily on the biomedical model of mental health services, including the front-line and excessive use of psychotropic medicines, and yet these models persist,” Mr. Pūras explains.

“This pattern occurs in countries across the national income spectrum”, he added. The UN expert points out that it “represents a failure to integrate evidence and the voices of those most affected into policy, and a failure to respect, protect and fulfil the right to health.”

In his report, Mr. Pūras warns that power and decision-making in mental health are concentrated in the hands of “biomedical gatekeepers”, particularly those representing biological psychiatry.

“These gatekeepers, supported by the pharmaceutical industry, maintain this power by adhering to two outdated concepts: that people experiencing mental distress and diagnosed with “mental disorders” are dangerous, and that biomedical interventions are medically necessary in many cases.”

In order to ensure compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Mr. Pūras calls for a paradigm shift as these concepts keep alive stigma and discrimination.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

Importance to travel & tourism

Mental health is certainly an underlying issue in the high-stress travel & tourism sector, especially in critical jobs such as aviation. It is not for nothing that those at the controls of all forms of transport are required to avoid alcohol for at least 24 hours before the journey. That may be a temporary form of ensuring mental fitness, but for many, poor mental health is as much a problem as poor physical health. Worth probing further.



SDG 3: UNICEF 'Super Dads' campaign spotlights fathers' critical role in children's early development



A four-year-old boy and his father Marshall Mejia, play in the water during a visit to the seashore, in their hometown of Dangriga, on the south-eastern coast of Belize. Photo: UNICEF/UN035756/LeMoyne



SDG 3: UNICEF ‘Super Dads’ campaign spotlights fathers’ critical role in children’s early development

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 6 June 2017 – As more than 90 countries prepare to mark Father’s Day later this month, prominent figures in sports and entertainment have joined ‘Super Dads,’ a campaign launched today by the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) that celebrates a father’s essential role in a child’s early cognitive development.

The [Super Dads](#) initiative is a part of a larger campaign called [#EarlyMomentsMatter](#), which aims to bring awareness to the significance of early childhood experiences on a child’s future.

Mahershala Ali, David Beckham, the All Blacks, Daniel Cormier, Novak Djokovic, Lewis Hamilton, Hugh Jackman, Sachin Tendulkar, Thalía and Chris Weidman are among the celebrities who will be featured for their “super dad” moments on UNICEF’s Instagram and Twitter. These UNICEF ambassadors and supporters have also shared their thoughts on the importance of their own fathers in their childhoods.

“When I was a young child, my father gave me the right amount of love, freedom and support to shape who I am today,” said UNICEF Ambassador Sachin Tendulkar. “Every kid needs protection, love, good food and play to support growth and development, and it’s up to both parents to provide these.”

Stars are not the only super dads that will be featured. Moving stories of fathers raising their children under difficult circumstances will be also posted alongside pictures and videos of celebrity dads.

One such story is of South Sudanese refugee Idro, a father of three daughters in Uganda’s Bidi Bidi refugee settlement. “If I can’t fulfil for my family, I am not happy,” said Idro, reflecting the fatherly compassion that

the campaign advocates for. Idro fled from violence with his family in order to protect his daughters and continues to provide them with as much support as possible. He tries to provide a stable environment by playing games and comforting his daughters despite their hardships.

RELATED: [UNICEF #EarlyMomentsMatter campaign promotes investments in early childhood development](#)

“Good parenting for young children living in highly stressful conditions like conflict or extreme poverty can even [provide a buffer](#), helping them to fully develop despite adversity,” said Pia Britto, UNICEF Chief of Early Childhood Development. Children’s brains form important neural connections within the first 1,000 days, which could decide their health, learning abilities, and income in later years.

Research also shows that positive interactions with fathers allow children to have better psychological health and life satisfaction in the future. Britto urges the private sector and governments to “break down the employment and societal obstacles” that prevent parents from giving their children the highest starting point possible.

Super Dads calls for families across the world to join in by sharing photos and videos of their own with the hashtag #EarlyMomentsMatter, which will be featured in a gallery for the campaign. Additionally, UNICEF will post the best submissions on its various digital platforms.

Importance to travel & tourism

There must be many “Super Dads” in the travel & tourism sector, too. How about a mini version of this great campaign in T&T.



SDG 4: Falling aid for education putting global goals at risk



Children at Bahadoub 2 school in Timbuktu, Mali. © UNICEF/PFPG2013P-0035/Harandane Dicko



SDG 4: Falling aid for education putting global goals at risk

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 6 June 2017 – Against the backdrop of aid allocations to education falling for the sixth year in a row, the United Nations agency mandated with promoting education globally has called on the donor community to focus more attention on the vital sector, especially in countries where needs are the greatest.

According to a [policy paper](#) by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's ([UNESCO](#)) Global Education Monitoring Report, total aid to education stands at \$12 billion – 4 per cent lower than the figure in 2010.

“Aid remains [far short of what is needed](#) to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, putting our commitments at risk,” said Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, in a news release announcing the findings.

“[Resources] need to be multiplied by at least six to achieve our common education goals and must go

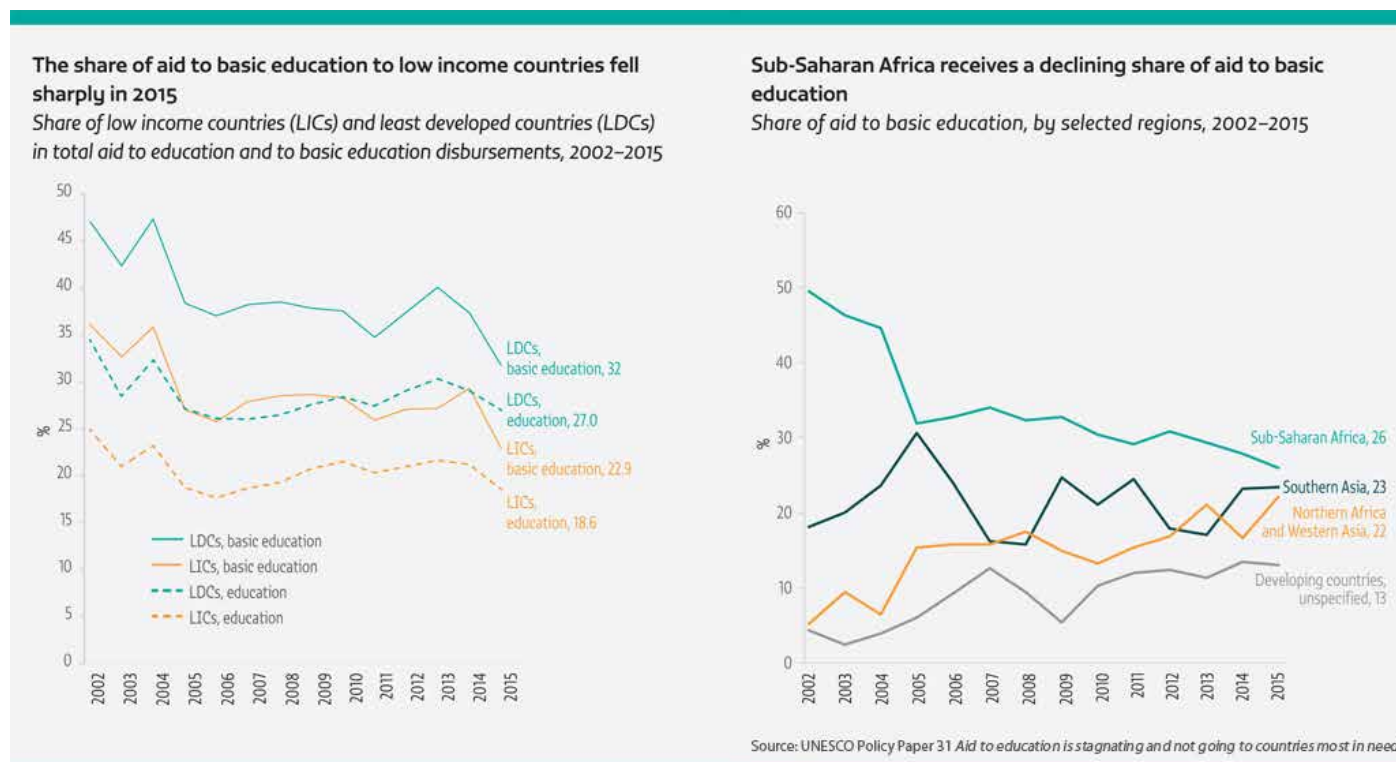
to countries most in need,” she cautioned, calling on donors not to shift their attention away from the poorest countries.

Based on newly released data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee, the study revealed that aid to basic education, such as support to pre-primary and primary education, as well as adult education and literacy programmes – stands at \$5.2 billion, 6 per cent lower than the amount in 2010.

It also noted that, while humanitarian aid to education reached a “historic high” – increasing almost 55 per cent from 2015 to 2016 – education received only 2.7 per cent of total aid available and less than half (48 per cent) of the amount needed.

In terms of national contributions, the United States and the United Kingdom were the two largest donors to basic education, but their allocations fell by 11 per cent and 9 per cent respectively in 2014-2015.

In contrast, contributions from Norway and Germany increased by 50 per cent and 34 per cent respectively, noted the UN agency.



The UNESCO policy paper, [Aid to Education is Stagnating and Not Going to Countries Most in Need](#) also voiced concern over skewed allocations by donors leading to aid not reaching places it is most needed.

Sub-Saharan Africa, home to over half of the world's out-of-school children currently receives less than half the aid to basic education it used to in 2002, and only 26 per cent of the total aid to basic education globally.

This contrasts to the 22 per cent allocation to the northern Africa and western Asia region, where 9 per cent of children are out of school.

Calling for urgent action to rectify the problems, UNESCO urged donors to “reverse the move away from education” and focus their attention on campaigns such as the Global Partnership for Education Replenishment campaign which is seeking to raise \$3.1 billion between 2018-2020 and programmes such as the Education Cannot Wait fund (established in 2016) that aims to raise \$3.85 billion by 2020, with the potential to transform the delivery of education in emergencies.

Importance to travel & tourism

Educational institutions in travel & tourism can certainly play a major role in rectifying this deficiency. How? Something to think about.



**SDG 4: Investing in poor
children saves more lives
per dollar spent**



A two-year-old girl is held by her mother as she is prescribed a course of medication to treat malaria at a community clinic in rural Kasungu district, Malawi. Photo: UNICEF/Hubbard



SDG 4: Investing in poor children saves more lives per dollar spent

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 28 June 2017 – Investing in the health and survival of the most deprived children and communities provides more value for money than investing in less deprived groups, saving almost twice as many lives for every \$1 million spent, according to a new study by the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)).

“The evidence is compelling: Investing in the poorest children is not only right in principle, it is also right in practice – saving more lives for every dollar spent,” [said](#) UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake in a press release on the study, titled *Narrowing the Gaps*.

The study backs up an unconventional prediction UNICEF made in 2010: the higher cost of reaching the poorest children would be outweighed by greater results.

“This is critical news for governments working to end all preventable child deaths at a time when every dollar counts,” Mr. Lake said, noting that investing equitably in children’s health also helps break intergenerational cycles of poverty and gives them a better chance of learning more in school and earning more as an adult.

The study analysed new data from the 51 countries where around 80 per cent of all newborn and under-five deaths occur. It assessed access to six high-impact maternal, newborn and child health interventions: the use of insecticide-treated bed nets, early initiation of breastfeeding, antenatal care, full vaccination, the presence of a skilled birth attendant during delivery, and seeking care for children with diarrhea, fever or pneumonia.

Findings show that improvements in coverage of life-saving interventions among poor groups helped decrease child mortality in these countries nearly three times faster than among non-poor groups. Also, interventions in poor groups proved 1.8 times more cost-effective in terms of lives saved.

The study also found that since birth rates were higher among the poor than the non-poor, the reduction in the under-five mortality rate in poor communities translated into 4.2 times more lives saved for every million people.

Further, it found that of the 1.1 million lives saved across the 51 countries during the final year studied for each country, nearly 85 per cent were among the poor.

The study lists Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Malawi as some of the countries with high rates of under-five mortality where focus on the most deprived has made a difference for children. Between 1990 and 2015, under-five mortality decreased by half in Afghanistan and by 74 per cent in Bangladesh and Malawi.

The findings come at a critical time, as governments continue their work towards achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), which set a target of ending all preventable deaths among newborns and children under the age of five by 2030. Unless progress on reducing child mortality accelerates, by 2030 almost 70 million children will die before reaching their fifth birthday.

The study calls on countries to take practical steps to reduce inequities, including: disaggregating data to identify the children being left behind; investing more in proven interventions to prevent and treat the biggest killers of children; strengthening health systems to make quality care more widely available; innovating to find new ways of reaching the unreached; and monitoring equity gaps using household surveys and national information systems.

Importance to travel & tourism

The dollar figures cited in this report are worth comparing to the mega billion dollars being spent globally on arms, ammunition and “safety & security.” This should be one of the core arguments of the travel & tourism industry. If we are supposed to make the world a better place, we will need to put our money where our mouths are.



**SDG 4: Millions could
escape poverty by finishing
secondary education**



Youth in the classroom. Photo: Deshan Tennekoon/World Bank.



SDG 4: Millions could escape poverty by finishing secondary education

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 22 June 2017 – While a new United Nations study shows that the global poverty rate could be more than halved if all adults completed secondary school, data show high out-of-school rates in many countries, making it likely that education completion levels will remain well below that target for generations.

“The new analysis on education’s far-reaching benefits released today should be good news for all those working on the Sustainable Development Goal to eradicate poverty by 2030,” said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

“It shows that we have a concrete plan to ensure people no longer have to live on barely a few dollars a day, and that plan has education at its heart,” she added.

Based on the effects that education had on growth and poverty reduction in developing countries from 1965 to 2010, the new analysis by UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report team, shows

that nearly 60 million people could escape poverty if all adults had just two more years of schooling.

“If all adults completed secondary education, 420 million could be lifted out of poverty, reducing the total number of poor people by more than half globally and by almost two-thirds in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia,” according to UNESCO.

The paper, from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) on reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education, is being released ahead of the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF)

which will be held in New York from 10 to 19 July and focuses on poverty eradication in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It demonstrates the importance of recognizing education as a core lever for ending poverty in all its forms, everywhere.

Studies have shown that education has direct and indirect impacts on both economic growth and poverty. It provides skills that boost employment opportunities and incomes while helping to protect from socio-economic vulnerabilities. An equitable expansion of education is likely to reduce inequality, lifting the poorest from the bottom of the ladder.

However, if current trends continue, of the 61 million primary school age children currently out of school, 17 million will never set foot in a classroom – one in three of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and Northern Africa, and more than one in four of those in Central Asia and Southern Asia.

Moreover, girls in poor countries continue to face particularly steep barriers to education.

While UNESCO underscores that education must reach the poorest in order to maximize its benefits and reduce income inequality, according to the GEM Report, children from the poorest 20 per cent of families are eight times as likely to be out of school as children from the richest 20 per cent in lower-middle-income countries.

The paper stresses the need to reduce the direct and indirect costs of education for families.

Importance to travel & tourism

A simple solution, isn't it? Just a few more years of education can pave the way for millions of young people to overcome poverty and live better lives. If this is not happening, why not? Another thought-prompter for travel & tourism policy makers and executives in both the public and private sectors.



SDG 5: Closing gender gap at work can yield incredible benefits



A woman walks speaks on the phone as she walks to work in Singapore. Photo: ILO/Giorgio Taraschi



SDG 5: Closing gender gap at work can yield incredible benefits

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 14 June 2017 – Reducing gender disparities at workplaces by 25 per cent by 2025 could inject nearly \$5.8 trillion into the global economy and boost tax revenues, a new report released today by the United Nations International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) has revealed.

According to the UN agency, even though women are significantly less likely to participate in the labour market than men, once they manage to enter the labour market, finding work remains even more difficult for them their male counterparts.

[“Helping women access the labour market is nevertheless an important first step,”](#) said ILO in a news release, noting that in 2017, the global labour force participation rate for women – at just over 49 per cent – is nearly 27 percentage points lower than for men.

This figure is forecast to remain unchanged in 2018.

Further recalling the commitment expressed by G20 leaders, in 2014, to reduce the gap in participation rates between men and women by 25 per cent by the year 2025, the ILO report [World Employment and Social Outlook Trends for Women 2017](#), estimates that some \$5.8 trillion could be added to the world economy.

This could also unlock large potential tax revenues, in particular in countries in the North Africa, Arab and Southern Asia regions.

In addition to the significant economic benefits, engaging more women in the world of work would have a positive impact on their well-being since most women would like to work.

“The fact that half of women worldwide are out of the labour force when 58 per cent of them would prefer to work at paid jobs is a strong indication that there are significant challenges restricting their capabilities and freedom to participate,” said Deborah Greenfield, the ILO Deputy Director-General for Policy.

“The most immediate concern for policy makers, therefore, should be to alleviate the constraints that women face in choosing to enter the labour market and address the barriers they are confronted with once they are in the workplace,” she added.

Attitudes on women and men ‘roles’ have to change

Furthermore, the ILO report also highlighted the need to “redefine the roles” of men and women at the workplace.

“We need to start by changing our attitudes towards the role of women in the world of work and in society. Far too often some members of society still fall back on the excuse that it is ‘unacceptable’ for a woman to have a paid job,” said Steven Tobin, the lead author of the report.

The report also emphasized the need to promote equal pay for work of equal value; tackle root causes of occupational and sectoral segregation; recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work; as well as transforming institutions to prevent and eliminate discrimination, violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work.

“Policies should also address the socio-economic factors that influence participation by introducing policies that improve work-family balance, create and protect quality jobs in the care economy and target the macroeconomic environment and informal economy,” added Mr. Tobin.

Importance to travel & tourism

Travel & tourism is already a major employer of women, arguably the most important employer. This report will help generate valuable ideas on how to ensure gender equality and fair treatment to ensure that women can climb up the corporate ladder and enhance the global status and respectability of travel & tourism as an equal opportunity employer.



SDG 5: WTO: Trade is a force for women's economic empowerment



SDG 5: WTO: Trade is a force for women's economic empowerment

Brussels, 20 June 2017, WTO media release -- Speaking at the International Forum on Women and Trade, WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo said that the playing field needed to be levelled for women around the world so that they can fully seize the benefits of trade.

He highlighted that tradable sectors are large sources of female employment, and that companies that export are often the largest employers of women in developing countries. For example, in Rwanda, 74% of those engaged in cross-border trade are women. In Cambodia, 86% of silk industry employees are women. In China, 55% of digital entrepreneurs are women.

DG Azevêdo argued that trade is an important promoter of women's economic empowerment but that a range of barriers hamper their access to international markets and the opportunities they provide. "The gender gap is great and a lot more needs to be done to close it," DG Azevêdo said. He described some of the barriers which, he said, any

inclusive trade policy should address. They include legal and regulatory barriers, access to capital,

cultural barriers and the provision of training to build the necessary knowledge and skills.

He set out some specific trade policy actions which could help to deal with these problems, including helping small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to trade. SMEs are important job providers for women, and therefore steps to support SMEs could benefit women disproportionately. He also emphasized the importance of investing in data gathering about how trade impacts women. "There is not enough data at present to properly assess where the gaps are and how we can address them," he said.

The Director-General concluded that this issue would benefit from greater focus at all levels – local, national, global. "If we want to change things, we all need to be engaged," he added.

DG Azevêdo was joined in a panel discussion by: Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary, Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Kenya; Francois-Philippe Champagne, Minister of International Trade, Canada; Jennifer Gallegos, Vice President of Development, International Women's Coffee Alliance; and Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Founder, Women in Parliaments, who moderated the session.

A new WTO brochure, entitled "[Gender Aware Trade Policy: A Springboard for Women's Economic Empowerment](#)", was made available at the Forum.

More information on the International Forum on Women and Trade is available [here](#).

Importance to travel & tourism

Replace the word "trade" with "Travel & Tourism," and the contents and conclusions of this report become directly relevant to us, too. A superb opportunity to highlight the contribution of women to the advancement of this industry of peace.



SDG 6: Thirsting for a Future: Water and children in a changing climate

THIRSTING FOR A FUTURE: WATER AND CHILDREN IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

When 12-year-old Swapna went back home the day after Cyclone Roanu hit Bangladesh in 2016 she could not believe her eyes – the entire neighbourhood, even the trees, had disappeared. (Source: UNICEF)



SDG 6: Thirsting for a Future: Water and children in a changing climate

In Zimbabwe, drought left Emmanuel struggling to feed his family. He agreed to a dowry of a few goats for his 15-year-old daughter. It meant one less mouth to feed, food and livestock for the family.

Over in the state of Alaska, Amaia, 11, stands on an ice floe in July 2016. In recent years, big ice floes can be found farther from the shore as the sea ice starts melting earlier and faster.

The impacts of climate change are being felt around the world. For many children, a change in climate is felt through a change in water. In times of drought or flood, in areas where sea level has risen or ice and snow have unseasonably melted, children are at risk – as the quality and the quantity of the water they rely on is under threat.

In the coming years, the demand for water will increase as populations grow and move, industries develop, and consumption increases. This can lead to water stress, as increasing demand and use of water strains available supplies.

The world is on the brink of a deadly crisis, as the combination of water stress and climate change creates a dangerous outlook for children.

Climate change is one of many forces contributing to an unfolding water crisis. In the coming years, the demand for water will increase as food production grows, populations grow and move, industries develop and consumption increases. This can lead to water stress, as increasing demand and use of water strain available supplies.

One of the most effective ways to protect children in the face of climate change is to safeguard their access to safe water and sanitation. This report shares a series of solutions, policy responses and case studies from UNICEF's work around the world.

Click here to https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_95074.html

Importance to travel & tourism

This report should be must-reading in the travel & tourism sector worldwide. Water is a source of life. Asian rivers are revered as “mothers” and named after goddesses. Yet, water is treated with even more disgraceful contempt than food.



SDG 7: 'Green' energy capacity surges as cost for renewables plunges



Ain Beni Mathar Integrated Combined Cycle Thermo-Solar Power Plant. Photo: World Bank/Dana Smillie



SDG 7: 'Green' energy capacity surges as cost for renewables plunges

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 7 June 2017 – The world is now adding more green energy capacity each year than it adds in new capacity from all fossil fuels combined, a United Nations-backed report revealed today, showing that the “renewables train has already left the station” and those who ignore this will be left behind.

Last year, renewable power installments increased by nine per cent over 2015 to nearly 2,017 gigawatts. Solar photovoltaic accounted for around 47 per cent of the total additions, followed by wind power at 34 per cent and hydropower at 15.5 per cent, according to the report.

“We all want a healthy environment and healthy people, and [clean energy is central](#) to the solution,” said Erik Solheim, head of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), responding to the REN21 report launch.

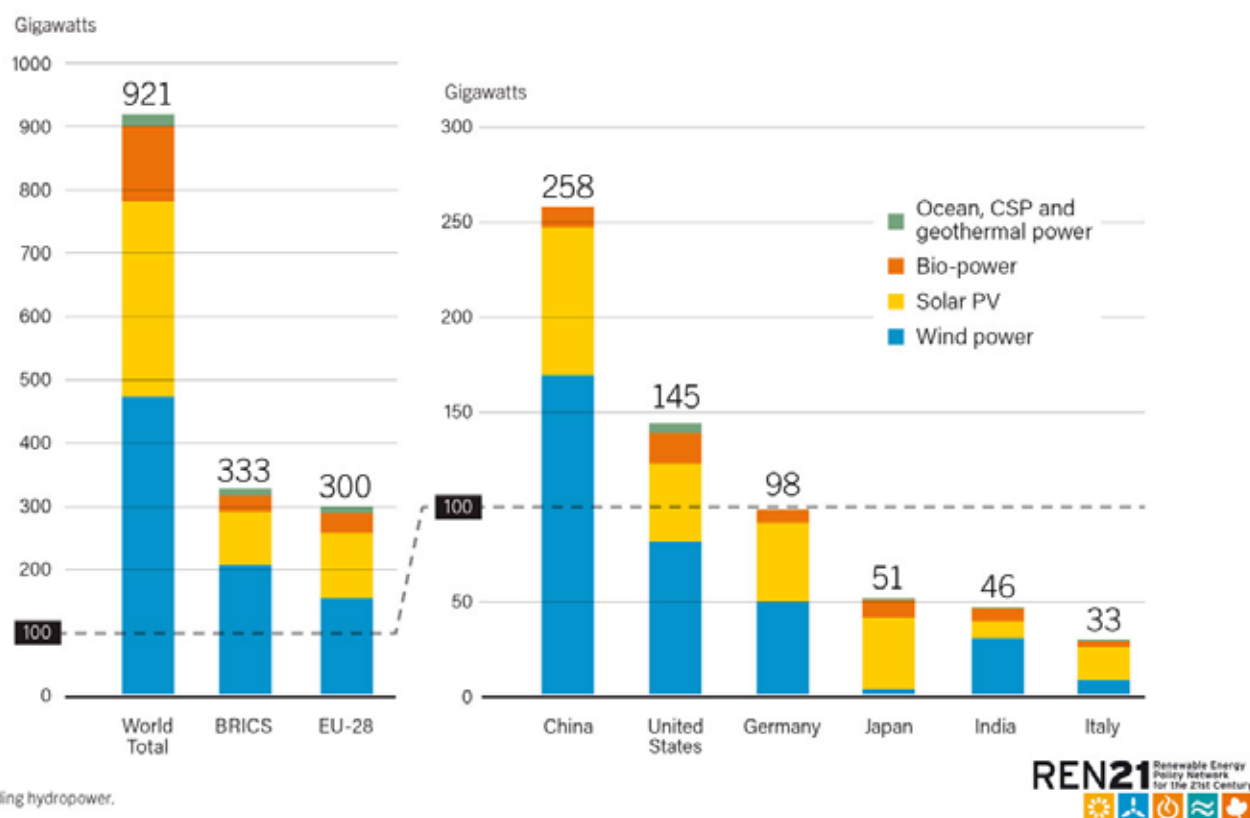
As the shift to clean power continues, renewables are becoming the least costly option as recent examples in Denmark, Egypt, India, Mexico, Peru and the United Arab Emirates show that energy has been delivered well below the equivalent costs for fossil fuel and nuclear energy in each of these countries.

“The world is adding more renewable power capacity each year than it adds in new capacity from all fossil fuels combined,” said Arthouros Zervos, Chair of the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21).

The UNEP-hosted multi-stakeholder network reported that for the fifth consecutive year, investment in new renewables (including all hydropower) was roughly double the investment in fossil fuel generating capacity, reaching about \$250 billion dollars.

“As the share of renewables grows we will need investment in infrastructure as well as a comprehensive set of tools,” Mr. Zervos pointed out. To enable further growth he calls for integrated and interconnected transmission and distribution networks, measures to balance supply and demand, sector coupling (for example the integration of power and transport networks) as well as the deployment of a wide range of enabling technologies.

Renewable Power Capacities in World, BRICS, EU-28 and Top 6 Countries, 2016



A slowdown in investment in renewables

A world that does not run on fossil fuels is no longer a far distant dream with the recorded exponential growth in solar and wind – although investments in renewables are diametrically different.

The UN agency warned that the energy transition is not happening fast enough to achieve the goals of the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change.

When it comes to the bottlenecks to ensure modern energy for all, projections show that global energy access progresses too slowly.

“A global transition to renewable energy technologies like solar and wind are key ingredients of delivering on the Paris Agreement, keeping the global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius

and avoiding catastrophic climate change,” said Mr. Solheim, pointing out that “this new report shows where we are on this journey, and the data is clear: we need to move faster.”

The global cost for the newly added renewable energy capacity is set at about \$242 billion. Compared to the previous year, it is actually a 23 per cent reduction in investment, with the biggest falls among developing and emerging market countries. At the same time, nuclear and fossil fuel subsidies continue to dramatically exceed those for renewable technologies. These subsidies continue to impede progress, said UNEP.

By the end of 2016, more than 50 countries had committed to phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, and some reforms have occurred, but not enough. In 2014 the ratio of fossil fuel subsidies to renewable energy subsidies was 4:1. For every dollar spent on renewables, governments spent four dollars on perpetuating the dependence on fossil fuels.

“The world is in a race against time,” says Christine Lins, Executive Secretary of REN21. “The single most important thing we could do to reduce CO2 emissions quickly and cost-effectively, is phase-out coal and speed up investments in energy efficiency and renewables. [The] withdrawal

of the United States from the Paris Agreement is unfortunate. But the renewables train has already left the station and those who ignore renewables’ central role in climate mitigation risk being left behind.”

Energy is crucial for achieving almost all of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), from its role in the eradication of poverty through advancements in health, education, water supply and industrialization, to combating climate change.

Importance to travel & tourism

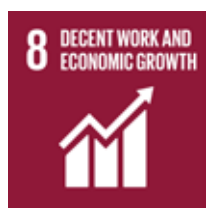
Advancing the cause of alternative energy is a natural fit for travel & tourism, a major guzzler of fossil fuels. Just about all forms of construction and transportation in the travel & tourism sector are well-suited to make the switch.



**SDG 8: With hidden
lives vital to our own,
'seafarers matter'**



Felixstowe, the busiest container port in the United Kingdom, where the IMO kicked off its 2017 World Maritime Day theme 'Connecting ships, ports and people.' Photo: International Maritime Organization (IMO)



SDG 8: With hidden lives vital to our own, 'seafarers matter'

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 25 June 2017 – Highlighting the challenges faced by seafarers – women and men sailing and working aboard ships – the United Nations International Maritime Organization has called on everyone around the world to show appreciation for their vital contributions.

“Even though seafaring can provide the basis for a fulfilling and life-long career, it is still a very difficult and demanding job,” Kitack Lim, the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), said [in his message](#) on [Day of the Seafarer](#).

In addition to personal issues, conditions onboard ships and in ports, unpaid wages, and even abandonment, mariners have to contend with long periods away from family and friends and the pressure to perform in a challenging economic environment, which multiply the anguish.

“It is easy for seafarers to feel lonely and isolated. To imagine that they do not matter. This year, we want to show [everyone] that seafarers do matter,” stressed Mr. Lim, which is also the theme for this year’s commemoration.

In particular, he praised the role of seafarer’s centres at port cities, where sailors and crew of ships visit for a “small taste of home” – a sanctuary where they can rest, recuperate, connect with loved ones back home, especially through social media, and if necessary avail of support to help them adjust and cope.

“We want to create a platform to give ports and seafarer centres the opportunity to demonstrate how much seafarer matter,” noted the IMO chief, at the Duckdalben Seafarer’s Centre in Hamburg, Germany, one of Europe’s biggest ports.

He also spoke of [events organized at ports and seafarer’s centres around the world](#) to connect the general public to seafarers and celebrate their contributions.

“As in previous years, the campaign will be centred on social media [to] spread the word as far as possible,” he added, calling on everyone to contribute and tag their messages, photos and videos to IMO’s social media channels ([on Twitter](#) and [on Facebook](#)).

“We ask all of you to join us and say *Seafarers matter!*”

The Day of the Seafarer, marked annually on 25 June, was established in a resolution adopted by the 2010 Diplomatic Conference in Manila, the capital of Philippines, to recognize the unique contribution made by seafarers from all over the world to international seaborne trade, the world economy and civil society as a whole.

Importance to travel & tourism

Did the cruise industry celebrate this day? If so, how? Interestingly, this Day of the Seafarer was created in the aftermath of a conference in the Philippines which is arguably the world’s biggest supplier of seafarers.



SDG 9: As booming digital economy sprints past poor countries, UN report urges closing investment divide



Two users browse websites on their computers (content blurred for privacy). Photo: ITU/A.Mhadhbi



SDG 9: As booming digital economy sprints past poor countries, UN report urges closing investment divide

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 7 June 2017 – Even though digital multinational enterprises – Internet and e-commerce platforms such as Uber, Instagram and Facebook – witnessed “dramatic” growth over the past few years, more than 60 of the top 100 such ventures were concentrated in three countries (the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany), leaving much room to grow elsewhere, a new, ground-breaking United Nations report has revealed.

According to the [World Investment Report 2017: Investment and the Digital Economy](#), released today by the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)), only four companies in the top 100 were based developing nations.

“The [digital economy has important implications for investment](#), and investment is crucial for digital development,” Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, said in a news release announcing the findings.

“[However] developing countries cannot be left behind. We need to create enabling policies that close the digital divide in global investment.”

The divide also held true for affiliates of those top 100 ventures as only 13 per cent were based in developing and transition economies, compared to about 30 per cent overall.

In terms of business and operations, digital multinational enterprises recorded about 70 per cent of their sales abroad but only 40 per cent of their assets were based outside their home countries, resulting in fewer jobs created directly in host countries.

However, such investments can increase competition and spur digital development, argued UNCTAD, emphasizing the need for regulations and policies for the promotion of investment that consider the new cross-border operating models of multinationals as well as those that strengthen digital development strategies.

Digital development in all countries, and particularly the participation of developing countries in the global digital economy, calls for targeted investment policies to build connectivity infrastructure, promote digital firms and support digitalization of the broader economy.

“This means creating and maintaining a conducive regulatory framework for digital firms, as well as active support measures, which may include establishing technology or innovation hubs, building or improving e-government services, and supporting venture capital funding and other innovative financing approaches,” it noted.

The World Investment Report also pointed out that global foreign direct investment (FDI) flows could rise by about 5 per cent, reaching almost \$1.8 trillion in 2017 and this modest increase is expected to continue into 2018, taking flows to \$1.85 trillion, and projections indicate that the US, China and India could be the top prospective destinations for FDI.

The Report also showed that the prospects remained moderately positive for most other regions – except Latin America and the Caribbean – with developing countries as a group expected to gain about 10 per cent.

“The road to a full recovery for FDI remains bumpy, but we are cautiously optimistic,” said Mr. Kituyi, expressing some concern that other factors such as the elevation of geopolitical risks and policy uncertainty may impact the scale of the upturn.

Importance to travel & tourism

Given its global nature, travel & tourism is a major source of cross-border investments, especially amongst small & medium sized enterprises, as well as a major user of the digital economy. The World Investment Report could be a good foundation for a more focussed report probing investment trends in travel & tourism. It may generate some surprising findings.



SDG 9: World Summit on Information Society hails 18 prize winners for supporting SDGs



SDG 9: World Summit on Information Society hails 18 prize winners for supporting SDGs

Geneva, 14 June 2017 (ITU media release) - ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao has announced the 18 winners of the WSIS Prizes at WSIS Forum 2017, taking place at the Geneva International Conference Centre. WSIS Prizes provides a platform from which to identify and showcase success stories across the 11 WSIS Action Lines defined in the Geneva Plan of Action. This year's theme focused on initiatives that also supported the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The awards are conferred through an open online voting process, which this year engaged over 300,000 stakeholders from around the world, with a record number 1.1 million votes cast by WSIS stakeholders. Nearly 500 projects were submitted by the WSIS stakeholder community, by far the highest number of submissions since the annual WSIS Prizes initiative was launched six years ago. From these submissions, 345 projects were nominated for the 2017 contest, reflecting both the prestigious nature of the award and the increasing role of ICTs in development strategies.

“The rich variety of winning projects recognized by WSIS Prizes 2017 demonstrates the varied roles that ICTs can play to support the SDGs,” said ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao. “These Winners and Champions represent the most innovative and successful ICT for development initiatives around the world, and exemplify the diversity of the WSIS multi-stakeholder community.”

WSIS Prizes 2017 winners include government departments, international organizations, private sector companies, NGOs and academia. In addition to the 18 category Winners, are 72 Champions (the first four runner-up projects in each category).

In line with the inclusive, multi-stakeholder character of the WSIS Process, the prizes recognize the outstanding achievements of a wide range of organizations. This year's 18 Winners, by WSIS Action Line, are:

Action Line C1 The role of government and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

Winner: Adqar's e-safe school online safety, Kalifa Empowerment Program for Students, United Arab Emirates

Action Line C2 Information and communication infrastructure

Winner: South-to North water diversion (Eastern route) communication optical cable project for the water resources dispatch and management system, China Communications Technology Co., Ltd., People's Republic of China

Action Line C3 Access to information and knowledge

Winner: DAISY-standard accessible reading materials for students with visual and print disabilities, Access to Information (a2i) Programme, Prime Minister's Office, People's Republic of Bangladesh

Action Line C4 Capacity building

Winner: Puntos México Conectado Programme, Ministry of Communications and Transportation, Mexico

Action Line C5 Building confidence & security in the use of ICTs

Winner: Multimedia distance-learning course on the safe use of Internet resources, A.S. Popov Odessa National Academy of Telecommunications, Ukraine

Action Line C6 *Enabling environment*

Winner: Egypt's National Program for ICT Accessibility in Education for Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Arab Republic of Egypt

Action Line C7 *E-government*

Winner: Rendering of state and municipal services in electronic format, Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Tatarstan, Russian Federation

Action Line C7 *E-business*

Winner: National Trade Platform, Singapore Customs, Republic of Singapore

Action Line C7 *E-learning*

Winner: E-learning and Virtual Classroom System, Kuwait University, State of Kuwait

Action Line C7 *E-health*

Winner: Informed: an innovation, socializing project at the service of Cuban public health; National Information Center for the Medical Sciences, Cuba

Action Line C7 *E-employment*

Winner: Social Network for Health Promoting Hospital, Advanced Info Services, Thailand

Action Line C7 *E-environment*

Winner: Greenmap Belarus, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of the Republic of Belarus, Republic of Belarus

Action Line C7 *E-agriculture*

Winner: Electronic Application System, Rural Support Service, Republic of Latvia

Action Line C7 *E-science*

Winner: Communication Technology and Networking for Development, World Science Project, Ghana

Action Line C8 *Cultural diversity & identity, linguistic diversity*

Winner: Turkcell "Hello, Hello" Mobile App for Integration of Syrian Refugees, Turkcell, Turkey

Action Line C9 *Media*

Winner: Agribusiness TV, MediaProd, Burkina Faso

Action Line C10 *Ethical dimensions of the Information Society*

Winner: Internet Sehat (Internet Healthy) Towards Indonesian Information Society, ICT Watch – Indonesia, Republic of Indonesia

Action Line C11 *International & regional cooperation*

Winner: African School on Internet Governance, Association for Progressive Communications, Republic of South Africa

Detailed descriptions of all WSIS Prizes 2017 winning projects are available at:

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsisp/prizes/2017/>

Background

WSIS Prizes is an international contest developed in response to requests from WSIS stakeholders to create an effective mechanism to evaluate and recognize individuals, governments, civil society, local, regional and international agencies, research institutions and private sector companies for outstanding success in implementing development-oriented strategies that leverage the power of ICTs. The WSIS Prizes contest is an integral part of the WSIS stocktaking process (www.wsis.org/stocktaking). The contest was held for the first time in 2012, and has rapidly gained attention and popularity within the ICT for Development (ICT4D) community.

Importance to travel & tourism

This is of enormous importance to the world of start-ups. The criteria for judging the investment potential for start-ups in travel & tourism is presently dominated largely by monetary returns. This new WSIS system presents a great template for changing the equation and giving start-up beauty contests more value and meaning.



**SDG 9: UN recognizes young
entrepreneurs on
Day for micro-, small,
medium-sized enterprises**



Portrait of clothing designer Lara Khoury in her studio in Beirut. UN Women/Joe Saade



SDG 9: UN recognizes young entrepreneurs on Day for micro-, small, medium-sized enterprises

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 27 June 2017 – United Nations agencies today launched a new campaign to make it easier for the 70 million unemployed youth to get financing and learn new skills to start a business.

The global campaign – launched by the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)) and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – will run through August of this year.

It will aim to “effectively enable young entrepreneurs to success and improve the sustainability and quality of self-employment opportunities for youth,” according to ILO.

The UN agency added that the main challenges to be addressed include “the lack of enabling policy and ecosystems, the limited access to capital, the insufficient tools to enhance skills development and knowledge transfer.”

The campaign will focus on strategies to promote “an enabling regulatory environment” for young people, make use of technology and networks, aim to allow greater access to finance, and provide greater support for young people.

The UN estimates that while 70 million youth are unemployed, an additional 150 million work yet live in moderate to extreme poverty.

Today’s launch comes on the first observance of the International Day for Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, which seeks to raise public awareness of these business which generally employ fewer than 250 people. This year’s theme is “youth entrepreneurship and self-employment.”

[The Day](#) was created in April to observe the Day and raise public awareness of their contribution to the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, which aims to alleviate poverty and preserve the people and the planet.

According to the data provided by the International Council for Small Business (ICSB), formal and informal Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) make up over 90 per cent of all firms and account on average for up to 70 per cent of total employment and 50 per cent of GDP.

Importance to travel & tourism

MSMEs are the bedrock of the travel & tourism sector. Campaigns such as this can play a major role in highlighting their contribution to economic development and seek solutions to the many challenges they face ranging from competition for staff to securing low-interest funding. Another opportunity to be seized by the many hotel and tour operators associations whose membership is mainly comprised of MSMEs.



**SDG 11: Polluted
environments kill
1.4 million
in Europe annually**



Air pollution from an old coal-fired power plant in Kosovo. Photo: World Bank/Lundrim Aliu



SDG 11: Polluted environments kill 1.4 million in Europe annually

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 13 June 2017 – As some 1.4 million people in Europe and Central Asia die prematurely each year from polluted environments, United Nations agency heads at high-level meeting call for regional leaders to scale up action to stem environmental deaths and diseases.

“In the era of Sustainable Development, we can prevent the 1.4 million environment related deaths by making health a political choice across all government sectors,” [said](#) Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab, World Health Organization Regional Director for Europe (WHO/Europe), at the opening of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Ostrava, Czech Republic.

European citizens annually lose 50 million years of healthy life due to environmental risks, corresponding to at least 15 per cent of Europe’s total deaths – around half of which are due to outdoor and indoor air pollution.

“We urge all European leaders to take this opportunity for more sustainable policies to address the health challenges of the 21st century,” he underscored.

WHO/Europe, the UN Economic Commission for Europe ([UNECE](#)) and the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), joined approximately 500 representatives from the 53 countries of the European Region together with international and non-governmental organizations, to commit to prioritizing action on environmental risks to health.

“We have enough evidence. We have solutions at hand. What we need is action,” agreed Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary of UNECE.

“Examples of solutions developed over the past 20 years by UNECE and WHO/Europe with a proven track record include the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, the Protocol on Water and Health and the joint Programme on Transport, Health and Environment. But we must do more to fulfil their potential to clean the air and water and promote smart cities and clean transport systems. And while doing more, we must build on the synergies embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Environment-related non-communicable diseases

Environmental risk factors are responsible for around 26 per cent of ischemic heart disease, 25 per cent of strokes and 17 per cent of cancers in Europe. Cardiovascular deaths and diseases from environmental exposures are three times higher in low and middle income countries than in high income ones.

Air pollution is Europe’s leading environmental killer, responsible for 620,000 deaths every year from both outdoor and indoor exposure.

“Successful cooperation among UNECE member States has led to significant reductions of air pollution in the region – thereby saving lives,” stressed Ms. Algayerova. “All recent studies show that this work needs to continue and be strengthened, and lessons learned should be shared with other regions,” she added.

Other environmental factors, such as chemical pollution, occupational risks and unsafe water and sanitation account for more deaths and diseases and road traffic injuries kill 85,000 people per year. Extreme weather events from climate change, rapid urbanization and unprecedented levels of migration further exacerbate Europeans’ health.

Investing in cities

By 2030, eight out of 10 Europeans will be living in cities, making them one of the main priorities in Europe’s agenda at the Ministerial Conference.

A new WHO report, Environment and health for European Cities in the 21st century: making a difference, developed jointly with UNECE and UNEP, makes the case for investing in cities to improve people’s health and reduce inequalities.

The Environment and Health Ministerial Conference in Ostrava, organized by WHO/Europe, in partnership with UNECE and UNEP was hosted by the Czech Republic and ran until 15 June.

Importance to travel & tourism

If this is a problem in Europe, it is even a bigger problem in Asia. Given the contribution of tour coaches to traffic congestion and the city transport requirements of individual tourists, it is worth debating whether travel & tourism is worsening the problem, and what can be done about it. Convention centres and organisers can certainly set the ball rolling by providing energy-efficient means of transport for MICE delegates.



SDG 13: Global temperatures hit record highs, more hot weather to come



The sun sets behind a series of overhead power lines. Photo: World Bank/ Curt Carnemark



SDG 13: Global temperatures hit record highs, more hot weather to come

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 20 June 2017 – Extremely high May and June temperatures have broken records in parts of Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and the United States, the United Nations weather agency reported today, warning of more heatwaves to come.

The heatwaves have arrived unusually early, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said, noting at the same time that [average global surface temperatures](#) over land and sea are the second highest on record for the first five months of 2017, according to analyses by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

In Portugal, extremely high temperatures of around 40 degrees Celsius contributed to the severity of the devastating, fast-moving weekend [wildfires](#) that ripped through the country's forested Pedrógão Grande region, some 150 kilometres (95 miles) north-east of Lisbon, leaving dozens dead and more injured.

WMO reported that Portugal is not the only European country experiencing the effects of the extreme weather, as neighbouring Spain – which had its warmest spring in over 50 years – and France, have seen record-breaking temperatures. France is expected to continue see afternoon temperatures more than 10 degrees above the average for this time of year.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the US is also experiencing record or near-record heat. In parts of the desert southwest and into California, temperatures have hovered near a blistering 120 degrees Fahrenheit (49 degrees Celsius). Media reports suggested today that some plane traffic was halted in and out of Phoenix Sky Harbour International Airport in Arizona because it was too hot to fly.

The flight cancellations came amidst of one of the hottest days in the past 30 years of record keeping in the US state.

Death Valley National Park in California issued warnings to visitors to expect high temperatures ranging from 100 to over 120 degrees Fahrenheit (38 to over 49 degrees Celsius), WMO added.

WMO will set up an international committee of experts to verify the temperature and assess whether it equals a reported 54 degrees Celsius [recorded in Kuwait last July](#), what was then the highest temperature for Asia, as well as for the entire Eastern hemisphere.

Importance to travel & tourism

There is more than enough global awareness of the impact of climate change, but if this report is correlated to the other item in this edition of The Olive Tree about the world's population hitting 9.8 billion by 2050 (which is what our children will inherit), then the impact and urgency of the combined challenge suddenly takes on a new dimension.



**SDG 15: Help preserve land
– our ‘home and future’ –
UN urges on World Day to
Combat Desertification**



A herder tends to his flock in the high Himalayan mountains in northern Pakistan. Photo: IFAD/Joanne Levitan



SDG 15: Help preserve land – our ‘home and future’ – UN urges on World Day to Combat Desertification

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 17 June 2017 – With hundreds of millions of people around the globe directly affected by desertification – the degradation of land ecosystems due to unsustainable farming or mining practices, or climate change – United Nations agencies have called for better management of land so that it can provide a place where individuals and communities “can build a future.”

“Population growth means [demand for food and water](#) is set to double by 2050 but crop yields are projected to fall precipitously on drought affected, degraded land. More than 1.3 billion people, mostly in the rural areas of developing countries, are in this situation,” said Monique Barbut, the Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification ([UNCCD](#)) secretariat, in her message on the [World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought](#).

“So this year, the Convention is calling for a focus on making the land and life in rural communities viable for young people [...] let us give them better choices and options.”

According to estimates, nearly 500 million hectares of once fertile land – close to two million square miles – have now been abandoned.

The UNCCD believes that with access to new technologies and to the knowledge, these lands can build resilience to extreme weather-elements like drought and with the right, feed a hungry planet and develop new green sectors of the economy.

“Let us give young people the chance to bring that natural capital back to life and into production [which can then] develop markets for rural products and revitalize communities.” added Ms. Barbut, calling for increased and relevant investments in land, rural infrastructure and skills development so that “the future can be bright.”

The role of environment change is also increasingly clear in motivating or compelling people to migrate or become displaced.

With [more land getting lost to desertification](#), rural populations – relying on pastoral livelihoods, agriculture and natural resources – will face additional vulnerabilities, compounding poverty, poor levels of education, lack of investment and isolation, voiced Irina Bokova, the head of UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

To address this growing threat, Ms. Bokova called for a two pronged approach: first, better land management to arrest desertification as well as for preserving its productivity; and second, strengthening resilience of vulnerable populations by supporting alternative livelihoods.

“We must recognise that desertification is a global phenomenon that threatens everyone and we must start to act globally to build a sustainable and stable future for all,” she underscored.

The UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) also highlighted the challenges noted by Ms. Bokova.

Erik Solheim, the Executive Director of UNEP, added: “[Desertification and land degradation] drives human displacement by threatening lives over the short term and making people’s livelihoods untenable over the long term, [particularly the poorest and most vulnerable](#).”

Given the significant challenges that loss in arable land and their impact in overall socio-economic conditions of affected populations, the subject also features prominently in the [2030 Agenda](#)’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

[Goal 15](#), in particular, calls for combatting desertification, and undertaking efforts to halt and reverse land degradation.

In August this year, countries from the Latin American region will be meeting in Bolivia’s in Santa Cruz de la Sierra where they will discuss better drought management and preparedness.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) – the UN agency that closely monitors global weather and climate patterns and provides member States with climate information to make effective decisions – is one of the organizers of the meeting along with UNCCD.

“Providing state of art climate information [is key] for [climate change adaptation](#) in vital sectors such as agriculture, food security and social well-being,” said WMO Secretary-General Peter Taalas in his message on the World Day, warning: “Increased frequency of droughts can lead to land degradation and eventually, if unchecked, to increased desertification.”

Commemorated annually on June 17, World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought seeks to promote public awareness of land degradation and to draw attention to the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification – the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.

This year’s commemoration focuses on the theme “Our Land. Our Home. Our Future.”

Importance to travel & tourism

The problem and the solution are both clearly highlighted here. With more land getting lost to desertification, rural populations relying on pastoral livelihoods, agriculture and natural resources will face additional vulnerabilities, compounding poverty, poor levels of education, lack of investment and isolation. To address this growing threat, UNESCO calls for better land management to arrest desertification as well as for preserving its productivity; and strengthening resilience of vulnerable populations by supporting alternative livelihoods. Travel & tourism can contribute to both.



SDG 16: UN chief kicks off countdown to Sept 21 International Day of Peace



Cheerful young students in their traditional dress proudly waive their national flags during the Peace Bell ceremony of the observance of the International Day of Peace at UN Headquarters in New York. UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras (file photo)



SDG 16: UN chief kicks off countdown to Sept 21 International Day of Peace

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 14 June 2017 – True peace requires building bridges, combating discrimination and standing up for the human rights of the world’s people, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, kicking off the 100-day countdown to the International Day of Peace, with a strong appeal to citizens, governments and leaders everywhere to “put peace first.”

Recalling that his very first act as he took up his duties as Secretary-General in January was to issue an [appeal](#) for peace, Mr. Guterres said the [International Day](#), marked annually on 21 September, “embodies our shared aspiration to end the needless suffering caused by armed conflict.”

Moreover, the Day offers a moment for the peoples of the world to acknowledge [the ties that bind them together](#), irrespective of their countries of origin, the Secretary-General said, adding: “It is a day on which the United Nations calls for a 24-hour global ceasefire, with the hope that one day of peace can lead to another, and another, and ultimately to a stilling of the guns.”

The UN chief explained that there is more to achieving peace than laying down weapons, “True peace requires building bridges, combating discrimination and standing up for the human rights of all the world’s people.”

As such, the theme for this year’s International Day of Peace is, ‘Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All’ – with a particular focus on the plight of [refugees and migrants](#) throughout the world.

“Our obligation as an international community is to ensure that everyone forced to flee their homes receives the protection to which they are entitled under international law. Our duty as a human family is to replace fear with kindness,” he continued.

Mr. Guterres urged everyone – over the next 100 days – to remember that millions of vulnerable members of our society, many of whom have lost everything, need our understanding and assistance.

He encouraged people to strategize together about what “we can do to help them.”

“Let us recognize the many ways in which they contribute to and strengthen their host countries and communities. And let us redouble our efforts to address the root causes of conflict, advance our work for the Sustainable Development Goals, and heighten our emphasis on preventing violence in the first place,” stressed Mr. Guterres.

“By opening our hearts, joining hands and reaching out to refugees and migrants, we can move closer to attaining peace, prosperity and protection for all,” concluded the Secretary-General.

Importance to travel & tourism

One of the biggest flaws in the travel & tourism industry is that it wastes enormous amounts of time discussing safety and security and crisis management, and not enough on building peace and friendship. Given the close proximity between the International Day of Peace (Sept 21) and World Tourism Day (Sept 27), it may be worthwhile to have a week-long series of high-powered events which link and commemorate both. It is long overdue for travel & tourism to move beyond its role as a job-creator and economic-driver, and respond to a higher calling which is far more critical, given the state of the world at the moment.



SDG 16: Water, peace and security inextricably linked, UN Security Council told



SDG 16: Water, peace and security inextricably linked, UN Security Council told

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 6 June 2017 – Stressing the importance of diplomacy to prevent and resolve trans-boundary disputes over water resources, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today told the United Nations Security Council that water serves as “a catalyst” for cooperation among nations, even those that are not on good terms.

“[Water, peace and security](#) are inextricably linked,” said Mr. Guterres during a meeting on preventive diplomacy and trans-boundary waters, which was chaired by Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, which holds the Council’s presidency for the month.

“I commend this Security Council meeting for highlighting how water is and should remain a reason for cooperation not conflict,” Mr. Guterres added.

With climate change having a growing impact, water scarcity is a growing concern, he pointed out, noting that by 2050 at least one in four people will live in a country where the lack of fresh water is chronic or recurrent.

Three-quarters of UN Member States share rivers or lake basins with their neighbours. There are more than 270 internationally shared river basins, which serve as the primary source of fresh water for approximately 40 per cent of the world’s population, including the Nile, the Indus, the Ganges, the Euphrates-Tigris, and the Mekong.

“That is why it is essential that nations cooperate to ensure water is shared equitably and used sustainably,” he said.

In the second half of the 20th century alone, some 287 international water agreements were signed.

In South America, Lake Titicaca, the largest freshwater lake on the continent, has long been a source of cooperation between Bolivia and Peru. The 1960 Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan has survived three wars between the two countries.

The Albufeira Convention, agreed when Mr. Guterres was Prime Minister of Portugal, continues to promote good relations on water management between his country and Spain.

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes became open for all UN Member States as of March last year, offering the opportunity to create a global framework for preventive diplomacy for dealing with transboundary water issues.

“Let us commit to investing in water security to ensure durable peace and security for all communities and nations,” he concluded.

Importance to travel & tourism

The Asia-Pacific region abounds with water resources, both oceanic and inland. The future of water is equally as important to agriculture as it is to travel & tourism. However, as an “industry of peace,” travel & tourism has a bigger responsibility to fulfill. Another challenge that deserves to be put on the agenda.



SDG 16: Project To End Violence Against Women And Girls In Asia-Pacific



Regional Training of Trainers in Bangkok. Photo: UN Women/Pornvit Visitoran



SDG 16: Project To End Violence Against Women And Girls In Asia-Pacific

Bangkok, June 28, 2017 (UN Women media release) – Governments, civil society and the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific are strengthening the roll-out and implementation of a multi-sectoral response to urgently address gender-based violence against women and girls across this diverse region.

More than 100 delegates representing a range of government and civil society partners from a dozen countries are attending a three-day meeting in Bangkok this week, convened by the Asia-Pacific regional offices of the [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#), [United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women \(UN Women\)](#), [the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

A collaborative and coordinated response is needed in every country, which brings together several key sectors, including the police, the legal and justice system, social services and health. To that end, a Joint UN Programme was established last year on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, with the participation of UNFPA, UN Women, UNODC, and WHO.

The [Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence](#) sets out concrete guidance for services that should be available to every survivor, no matter where she lives or who she is. It builds on existing standards and applies to the health, social services, police, and justice sectors, as well as to overall governance and coordination.

The Essential Services Package facilitates the implementation of several global and regional commitments made by Member States to address violence against women and girls, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2016 WHO global plan of action on health systems' response to violence against women and girls, and the 2013 Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

“This package of services emphasizes more than ever the critical importance of coordinated approaches that place the survivor at the center of response and referral, prioritizing her safety and well-being,” said Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific.

Sobering statistics

WHO estimates that globally one in three women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner. According to [UNFPA's 2016 Regional Snapshot](#) on prevalence of violence against women in the Asia-Pacific region between 15 percent to 68 percent of women have reported experiencing physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

“Violence against women and girls is a significant public health concern and human rights violation in our region,” noted Yoriko Yasukawa, UNFPA Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. “It takes a huge toll on the health and socio-economic well-being of those who experience it, often hindering their ability to fulfil their true potential and role in their communities and societies.”

“Violence has multiple impacts on the lives of women and girls including their physical and mental health,” said Dr Mahmoud Fikri, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region. “The health sector is a key entry point for women and girls who experience violence, and should have the capacity to provide them with the appropriate health services that they need. It is paramount that this is integrated into efforts to attain health-related and other Sustainable Development Goals and to ensure that no one is left behind.”

“Countries in our region are committed to addressing gender-based violence. As mandated by the World Health Assembly resolution on the global plan of action on violence against women and girls, the health sector, in coordination with other sectors, is stepping up its efforts to provide survivor-centered care by training health care providers and improving access to services,” said Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia Region. “This initiative provides an important avenue for scaling up health services in line with WHO guidelines as part of a multisectoral response.”

This week's Bangkok meeting draws participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste.

It follows a similar meeting last November, also convened by the UN, in which 10 other Asia-Pacific countries participated: Cambodia, China, Fiji, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, the Solomon Islands and Viet Nam.

“We've developed guidance and assisted countries to provide essential services through the programme,” explained Jeremy Douglas, Regional Representative of UNODC for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. “The package provides a range of tools and helps strengthen the capacity of police, justice and health service providers to work together, and to address violence against women from different perspectives.” The package is being piloted in up to ten low- to middle-income countries from 2016 through 2018.

In Asia-Pacific, the pilot countries are Cambodia, Kiribati, Pakistan, Viet Nam and the Solomon Islands.

“Implementing the essential services package helps fill the gap between agreements UN Member States have made at the international level to address violence against women and girls and the actual work done at country level to put in place quality services and responses,” said UN Women's Miwa Kato. “This ensures that theory is translated into practice, to protect, benefit and ultimately empower millions of women and girls across the region.”

“The SDGs at heart are about building more caring, equal and democratic societies,” concluded UNFPA's Yoriko Yasukawa. “Taking aim at gender-based violence with a view to ending it, and ensuring that all women and girls everywhere are treated with dignity and respect, forms the foundation of that endeavor for all the UN and all its partners involved in implementing the Essential Services Package”.

Resources:

Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence: <http://bit.ly/2tmlIBq>

WHO global plan of action on health systems response to violence against women and girls: <http://bit.ly/2lxJOGA>

Gender-based Violence: An overview: <http://bit.ly/17a77y6>

Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence against Women: <http://bit.ly/1HpklYH>

Importance to travel & tourism

As the travel & tourism industry is a major employer of women, it is bound to be impacted by violence against women. Has any industry academic ever studied the impact of violence against women in travel & tourism, in terms of productivity lost, stress, depression and assorted other factors? If not, why not? Perhaps if such a study is done, it may help travel & tourism contribute to a solution.

