



THE OLIVE TREE

Edition 7. May - June 2018

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

พระเจ้าทรงเป็นนิรันดร์

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

ศาสตร์ของพระราชากับการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน His Majesty's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy for SDGs

หลักปรัชญาของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงเป็นหลักในการคิด ตัดสินใจ และการปฏิบัติ สำหรับการดำเนินชีวิตหรือประกอบกิจการงานใด ๆ ด้วยการใช้ **ความรู้** และ **คุณธรรม** เป็นฐาน ผ่านการไตร่ตรองด้วยการใช้หลักสำคัญ ๓ ประการ ได้แก่ พอประมาณ ไม่มากเกินไป ไม่น้อยเกินไป มีเหตุผล ตามหลักวิชาการ มีภูมิคุ้มกัน พร้อมรองรับการเปลี่ยนแปลงหรือวิกฤตที่อาจเกิดขึ้น ซึ่งจะนำไปสู่การพัฒนาอย่างสมดุลในทุกมิติ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นด้านเศรษฐกิจ สังคม สิ่งแวดล้อม และวัฒนธรรม อันเป็นแนวทางที่จะนำไปสู่ **ความสุขที่ยั่งยืน** ได้อย่างแท้จริง

"Sufficiency Economy Philosophy" is a mindset for decision-making. We base our decisions on our **Knowledge** using our internal value - our **virtues** - through applying the three principles of **moderation, reasonableness** and **prudence**. We aim for the outcomes of our decision to be balanced among the four dimensions of human life: **economy, society, environment** and **culture**, in order to promote sustainable happiness for all.



The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of Thailand's late monarch, His Majesty King Bhumibhol Adulyadej, designed in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian economic crisis, offers one of the best models of Alternative Development globally. It is now going mainstream, primarily because it has much in common with the UN SDGs. Thailand, where the 1997 Asian economic crisis started, is certainly according it more respect than ever before. The rest of the world needs to follow if true "Sustainability" is to be realised.



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EXECUTIVE EDITOR AND PUBLISHER



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THE OLIVE TREE

Design & Layout: Nusreen Ekachon



MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE EDITOR

IMTIAZ MUQBIL

The world is awash with statistics. Broadly speaking, they fall into two categories -- “good” stats and “bad” stats. The travel & tourism industry is perhaps over-obsessed with “good” stats.

According to the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines, elevated business and consumer confidence levels helped the region’s airlines carry 316.8 million international passengers in 2017, a solid 6.2% increase over 2016. Demand as measured in revenue passenger kilometres (RPK) increased by 8.2%. Average international passenger load factor rose by 1.2 percentage points to reach 79.9% in 2017, with a 6.6% expansion in available seat capacity.

All sounds good, doesn’t it?

Take a look at some “bad” statistics, based on U.N. reports and data, all reported in various articles in this issue of The Olive Tree:

(+) Driven largely by climate disasters and conflict, levels of acute hunger surged in 2017, leaving some 124 million people across 51 countries facing hunger crises – 11 million more than the previous year.

(+) In South Asia, major monsoon floods affected 41 million people.

(+) Weather-related disasters caused some \$320 billion in economic damage, making 2017 the costliest year ever for such losses.

(+) 700 million people worldwide at risk of being displaced by intense water scarcity by 2030.

(+) More than eight per cent of the population lives in poverty; 192 million are unemployed; and young people are three times more likely to be jobless.

(+) In the past quarter of a century, atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide have risen from 360 parts per million to more than 400 ppm.

(+) Around 30% of the world’s population now live in climatic conditions that deliver potentially deadly temperatures at least 20 days a year.

Based on the “building the business” mantra, the travel & tourism industry salivates at the “good” stats and sweeps the bad ones under the carpet.

But as any doctor will tell you after a medical checkup, ignoring the early warning signs (bad stats) today guarantees the emergence of potentially life threatening problems tomorrow. The faster the early warning signs are addressed, the greater the chances of a longer, healthier life.

Raising awareness of these early warning signs has been the over-arching goal of The Olive Tree ever since its inception in March 2017. Addressing the statistical imbalance is a much better way of building sustainable businesses, communities and industries at large.



MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN, JETWING HOTELS

HIRAN COORAY

There can be no higher contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals than building peace. In May 2018, the annual PATA summit will be convening in Korea, where peace is all set to break out after seven decades of confrontation and conflict.

The leaders of the Korean peninsula deserve to be congratulated for their commitment to turning swords into ploughshares. Truly, blessed are the peacemakers.

I share the outreach for peace outlined by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his report to a high-level meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace held at the UN headquarters on 24-25 April. Mr. Guterres says, “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development contains the blueprint of the common vision of society towards which the world is trying to move. Inclusive and sustainable development not only is an end in itself but also happens to be the best defence against the risks of violent conflict.”

Mr. Guterres says everyone should enlist for the cause. “The scale and nature of the challenge of sustaining peace calls for closer strategic and operational partnerships among the United Nations, national Governments and other key stakeholders, including international, regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society organizations, women’s groups, youth organizations and the private sector, taking into account national priorities and policies. In today’s complex world, those partnerships need to harness the energies of all sectors of society.”

I also concur with the words of Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President, UN General Assembly: “I’m talking about the kind of peace that can be taken for granted. The kind of peace that won’t disappear at the next election cycle. The kind of peace that is measured not in months or years, but in generations.”

We in Sri Lanka applaud the Korean leaders for their foresight, maturity and wisdom. We, too, are slowly rebuilding Sri Lanka after a 26-year conflict that caused hundreds of thousands of casualties. Travel & tourism is playing a major role in this rebuilding process via inclusive development and job creation.

As a former PATA Chairman, it is my fervent and sincere hope that the PATA annual summit can advance the cause of peace in Korea and other parts of Asia and beyond. We are also proud to sponsor The Olive Tree, the first and only publication designed to help travel & tourism become a more enthusiastic part of the solution in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



MESSAGE FROM FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, FREME TRAVEL, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

MICHAEL LEE

The name of Brunei Darussalam translates as The Abode of Peace. With more than 70% forest cover and a population of only 423,000, Brunei is truly an Abode of Peace in both spirit and letter.

Brunei Darussalam's bio-rich tropical rainforests are in pristine condition and protected by effective legislation. They act as global carbon sinks, absorbing millions of tonnes of carbon emissions and alleviating the impact of climate change. That in itself is a significant contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This rainforest heritage is at the core of Brunei Darussalam's tourism promotion efforts. Plans call for a doubling of tourist arrivals by air (from 218,000 tourists in 2015 to 450,000 tourists by 2020). Nature tourism will allow visitors to feel the peace in the clean, green surroundings of Ulu Temburong national park, and enjoy eco-adventure activities such as bird-watching, trekking and river-rafting.

Established in 1971, Freme Travel has built a revered reputation for reliable and professional service and is considered to be the most innovative Travel Agency in Brunei Darussalam. We are experts in special interest adventure activities, corporate team building, education programmes, sports (eg. golf) and many more. Guests can stay overnight and relax in the arms of Mother Nature at our very own Rainforest Lodge at Ulu Temburong National Park.

Please click here for more on our [Temburong tours](#) and [Teambuilding tours](#).

Freme Travel is proud to support the UN Sustainable Development Goals and The Olive Tree, the first and only travel trade publication devoted to strengthening the contribution of Travel & Tourism to the UN SDGs.

LEAD STORY 1

A New Approach to Peace



By Miroslav Lajčák, President, United Nations General Assembly, 2018.

UNITED NATIONS 16 April 2018 - When the United Nations was created, its founders envisioned a different kind of world.

A world in which disputes were resolved in meeting rooms and not battlefields. A world in which wars were stopped before they broke out. A world that didn't wait for lives to be lost before springing into action.

But violent conflicts are on the rise in many parts of the world today. They're becoming more drawn out, complex and deadly. Civilians are no longer killed in cross-fire; they are now the targets of direct attacks. We are also seeing an unprecedented number of people leaving their homes, out of fear and desperation.

And that is why the UN needs a new approach to peace.

I will convene a High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in New York on 24 and 25 April. It will bring world leaders together to focus on conflict prevention, mediation, dialogue and diplomacy. This is part of a wider effort by UN Member States to help our Organisation do better at fostering peace.

And when I say peace, I'm talking about the kind of peace that can be taken for granted. The kind of peace that won't disappear at the next election cycle. The kind of peace that is measured not in months or years, but in generations.

This is what we call "Sustaining Peace". And this is what we should be working for – rather than scrambling for solutions, once conflict has broken out.

Some might say that true lasting peace is impossible in certain parts of the world. But it is not. I have seen this firsthand. When Montenegro split from Serbia, peace was not a given. In fact, some people were predicting serious violence. But through intense diplomatic efforts, and real political will, peace persevered. And it has lasted – with no signs that it will waver in the future.

Last month, I travelled to western Colombia and was inspired to see indigenous communities

working with the UN to build peace through strengthening social bonds. I was inspired to see villagers, some of whom had suffered through more than 50 years of war, excited about their futures. One woman told me about her people's determination not to slide back into conflict.

These are the examples of Sustaining Peace, which are taking place now – all around the world. We may have the bulk of our discussions in New York. But they should be led by experience from the ground. We need to highlight what the real peacebuilders are doing – from those running women's peace huts in Liberia, to those organising mediation workshops in Kyrgyzstan. That's why the High-Level Meeting will pool actors from across different countries, sectors and societies, and allow them to share their insights.

Of course, it won't matter that everyone buys into Sustaining Peace if there are no funds to make it happen. We need more investment in prevention. When conflict causes societies to collapse, social fabric tears. Buildings are destroyed, and no one fixes them. Salaries stop getting paid. Water stops flowing out of taps.

So then we spend money on rebuilding – but so much more than what we'd spend on preventing conflict in the first place. Aside from the suffering that we're failing to avert, that just doesn't make financial sense. Increasing investment in even a handful of countries can result in billions of dollars of savings for the international community.

At the end of the day, what we can't forget is that the UN was founded for peace. That's what its flag should stand for. Its success in preventing conflict should be the norm – not the exception. It must be the world's broker for peace.

Importance to travel & tourism

This edition of The Olive Tree coincides with the PATA Annual Summit 2018. Somewhat fortuitously, this summit is being held in Korea, host of the 2018 Winter Olympics, under the theme "Building Bridges, Connecting People". Korea is now in the midst of an euphoric outbreak of peace. The former warring countries of North and South Korea are set to become the perfect example of conflict-prevention. It is an opportunity too good to be missed for travel & tourism to advance the cause.

LEAD STORY 2

What do people fight over? The answers are simpler than you might think.

Co-authors: Alys Willman and Neelam Verjee

Willman is a Former Senior Social Development Specialist, Fragility, Conflict & Violence Group. Verjee is Social Development Specialist, Fragility, Conflict & Violence Group, The World Bank



Washington DC., The World Bank, 04 April 2018 -- The history of humankind is filled with violence. People have been hurting and killing one another practically since they stood up and walked on two legs. And while each battle claims a unique call-to-arms, at the end of the day, the rallying cries are always strikingly similar. Human beings prefer to remain peaceful, except when their lives or livelihoods are threatened.

In the study [*Pathways for Peace*](#), we examined conflicts throughout history, across the world, and found that while every violent conflict has unique characteristics, conflict tends to play out in a handful of critical spaces that pertain to safety, livelihoods, and well-being. These spaces, or “arenas,” involve power and governance; access to land and natural resources; delivery of services; and justice and security.

Because each arena is essential to livelihoods and well-being, exclusion from any one of them can quite literally be a matter of life or death. For example:

Competition for power has marked conflicts for time eternal. Who sits at the table where decisions are made? Who gets to make or change the rules? Who has the power to exclude others? The answers to these questions fundamentally determine a society's organization and health. The more inclusive and representative a society is vis-à-vis power sharing, the greater the chances for avoiding violence. One way to manage conflicts over political power that risk becoming violent is through political settlement, which can be either explicit or implicit. Power-sharing agreements are an important aspect of political settlements, and help to allocate a share of power to various groups within society. These arrangements also come with their own risks—and in turn need to be managed. Violence can also flare up around elections, as they by definition produce winners and losers and can bring forth demands, grievances, and expectations.

By extension, political power translates into having power over **land and natural resources**. Just like the children's game of "capture the flag," the team with the most territory wins. Today, this arena faces enormous pressure from the impacts of climate change, population growth, urbanization, and the expansion of large-scale agriculture. Violent conflict around land is typically stoked by grievances related to land scarcity, insecurity of tenure, and historical injustices, which can play out individually or in combination. Access to water (described as the "petroleum of the next century") can act as a risk factor in both intra- and interstate conflict, while failure to achieve water security can act as a risk multiplier. The potential for extractive resources to fuel instability and conflict is well documented—although they also can confer significant benefits onto populations and improve development outcomes.

Service delivery, too, represents an arena of contention. How services are delivered, whether access is perceived as fair or even, and whether there are means of recourse for unfair outcomes all matter. Indeed, in terms of state legitimacy, perceptions of fairness and inclusion regarding service delivery matter as much, if not more, than the quality of the services or who delivers them. Because the state is ultimately responsible for ensuring service delivery—even if it may not be the provider, in all cases—perceptions in this arena affect overall state legitimacy.

Finally, and fundamentally, grievances around access to basic **security and justice** drive many of today's violent conflicts, just as they have throughout history. In particular, law enforcement practices that are seen as targeting particular groups—youth, members of marginalized minorities—are one of today's leading sources of grievance that push young people to join armed groups, including violent extremist groups.

In all these arenas, inclusiveness and perceptions of fairness matter as much, and perhaps more, than inequality in outcomes.

Because they are so contentious, these arenas can be highly resistant to reform. This is not helped by the fact that those with the power to expand access tend to be those with the most to lose from that expansion. It is those actors who are already at the table who must agree to change the rules and redefine the power balance in the arenas, and they may see little benefit in altering the status quo.

While the extent to which these arenas factor into different conflicts today varies, it is clear that no country has emerged from violent conflict, or pulled back from the brink of violent conflict, without somehow addressing conflict in these arenas. For example, land reform is a pillar of Colombia's peace agreement and its implementation. Likewise, Niger's Renaissance Project attempts to address social and economic grievances that could translate into conflict risks by reducing poverty across groups.

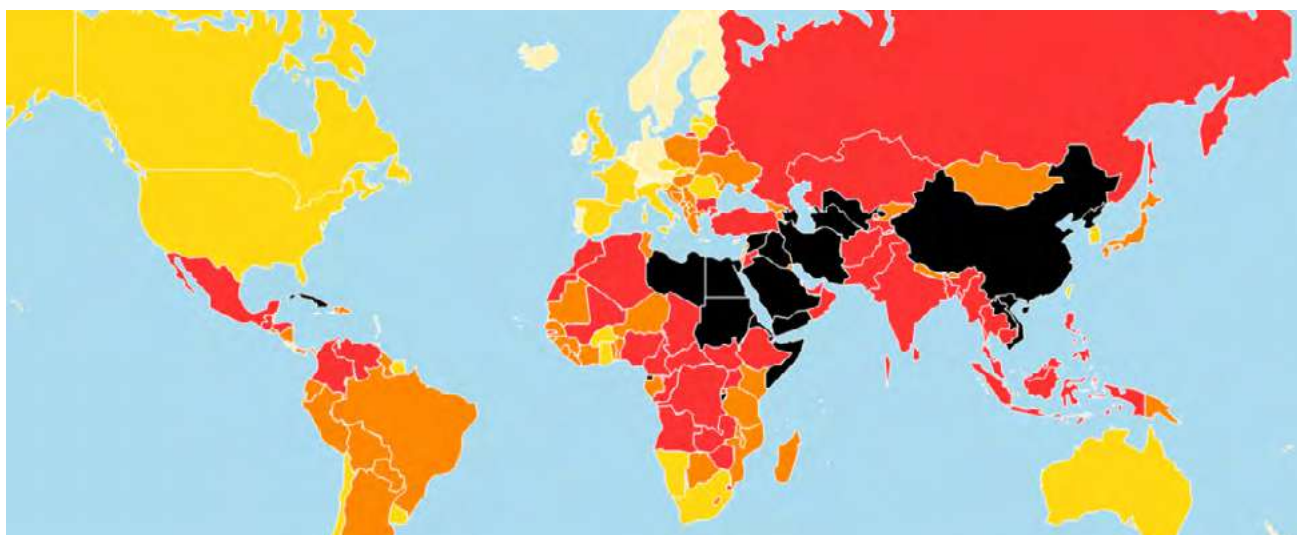
The message is clear: sooner or later, countries will need to address conflict in these critical arenas. They will need adequate support to do so, or we can expect conflict to continue.

Importance to travel & tourism

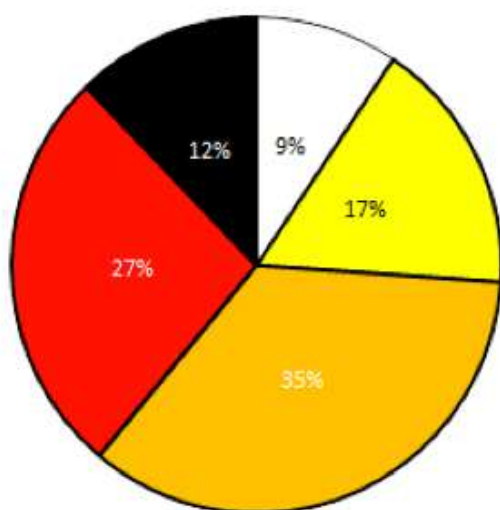
This could become the subject of an entire tourism industry conference in itself. A self-proclaimed industry of peace, travel & tourism is too full of talk-shops about peace, none of which achieve anything substantive. If the subject is taken a little more seriously, a tourism conference dedicated to examining "What People Fight Over?" is long overdue. More importantly, what remedial role can be played by travel & tourism in addressing these root causes of violence and conflict?

LEAD STORY 3

RSF Index 2018: Hatred of journalism threatens democracies



Colour distribution in 2018



Good (white)
Fairly good (yellow)
Problematic (orange)
Bad (red)
Very bad (black)

The 2018 World Press Freedom Index, compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), reflects growing animosity towards journalists. Hostility towards the media, openly encouraged by political leaders, and the efforts of authoritarian regimes to export their vision of journalism pose a threat to democracies.

The climate of hatred is steadily more visible in the Index, which evaluates the level of press freedom in 180 countries each year. Hostility towards the media from political leaders is no longer limited to authoritarian countries such as Turkey (down two at 157th) and Egypt (161st), where “media-phobia” is now so pronounced that journalists are routinely accused of terrorism and all those who don’t offer loyalty are arbitrarily imprisoned.

More and more democratically-elected leaders no longer see the media as part of democracy’s essential underpinning, but as an adversary to which they openly display their aversion. The United States, the country of the First Amendment, has fallen again in the Index under Donald Trump, this time two places to 45th. A media-bashing enthusiast, Trump has referred to reporters “enemies of the people,” the term once used by Joseph Stalin.

The line separating verbal violence from physical violence is dissolving. In the Philippines (down six at 133rd), President Rodrigo Duterte not only constantly insults reporters but has also warned them that they “are not exempted from assassination.” In India (down two at 138th), hate speech targeting journalists is shared and amplified on social networks, often by troll armies in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s pay. In each of these countries, at least four journalists were gunned down in cold blood in the space of a year.

Verbal violence from politicians against the media is also on the rise in Europe, although it is the region that respects press freedom most. In the Czech Republic (down 11 at 34th), President Milos Zeman turned up at a press conference with a fake Kalashnikov inscribed with the words “for journalists.” In Slovakia, (down 10 at 27th), then Prime Minister Robert Fico called journalists “filthy anti-Slovak prostitutes” and “idiotic hyenas.” A Slovak reporter, Ján Kuciak, was shot dead in his home in February 2018, just four months after another European journalist, Daphne Caruana Galizia, was killed by a targeted car-bombing in Malta (down 18 at 65th).

“The unleashing of hatred towards journalists is one of the worst threats to democracies,” RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire said. “Political leaders who fuel loathing for reporters bear heavy responsibility because they undermine the concept of public debate based on facts instead of propaganda. To dispute the legitimacy of journalism today is to play with extremely dangerous political fire.”

Norway and North Korea, first and last again in 2018

In this year’s Index, Norway is first for the second year running, followed – as it was last year – by Sweden (2nd). Although traditionally respectful of press freedom, the Nordic countries have also been affected by the overall decline. Undermined by a case threatening the confidentiality of a journalist’s sources, Finland (down one at 4th) has fallen for the second year running, surrendering its third place to the Netherlands. At the other end of the Index, North Korea (180th) is still last.

The Index also reflects the growing influence of “strongmen” and rival models. After stifling independent voices at home, Vladimir Putin’s Russia (148th) is extending its propaganda network by means of media outlets such as RT and Sputnik, while Xi Jinping’s China (176th) is exporting its tightly controlled news and information model in Asia. Their relentless suppression of criticism and dissent provides support to other countries near the bottom of the Index such as Vietnam (175th), Turkmenistan (178th) and Azerbaijan (163rd).

When it’s not despots, it’s war that helps turn countries into news and information black holes – countries such as Iraq (down two at 160th), which this year joined those at the very bottom of the Index where the situation is classified as “very bad.” There have never been so many countries that are coloured black on the press freedom map.

Breakdown of countries by their situation

Regional indicators worsening

It’s in Europe, the region where press freedom is the safest, that the regional indicator has worsened most this year. Four of this year’s five biggest falls in the Index are those of European countries: Malta (down 18 at 65th), Czech Republic (down 11 at 34th), Serbia (down 10 at 76th) and Slovakia (down 10 at 27th). The European model’s slow erosion is continuing (see our regional analysis: Journalists are murdered in Europe as well).

REGIONAL INDICATORS

Ranked second (but more than 10 points worse than Europe), the Americas contain a wide range of situations (see our regional analyses [US falls as Canada rises](#) and [Mixed performance in Latin America](#)). Violence and impunity continue to feed fear and self-censorship in Central America. Mexico (147th) became the world's second deadliest country for journalists in 2017, with 11 killed. Thanks to President's Maduro's increasingly authoritarian excesses, Venezuela (143rd) dropped six places, the region's biggest fall. On the other hand, Ecuador (92nd) jumped 13 places, the hemisphere's greatest rise, because tension between the authorities and privately-owned media abated. In North America, Donald Trump's USA slipped another two places while Justin Trudeau's Canada rose four and entered the top 20 at 18th place, a level where the situation is classified as "fairly good."

Africa came next, with a score that is slightly better than in 2017 but also contained a wide range of internal variation (see our regional analysis [The dangers of reporting in Africa](#)). Frequent Internet cuts, especially in Cameroon (129th) and Democratic Republic of Congo (154th), combined with frequent attacks and arrests are the region's latest forms of censorship. Mauritania (72nd) suffered the region's biggest fall (17 places) after adopting a law under which blasphemy and apostasy are punishable by death even if the accused repents. But a more promising era for journalists may result from the departure of three of Africa's most predatory presidents, in Zimbabwe (up two as 126th), Angola (up four at 121st) and Gambia, whose 21-place jump to 122nd was Africa's biggest.

In the Asia-Pacific region, still ranked fourth in the Index, South Korea jumped 20 places to 43rd, the Index's second biggest rise, after Moon Jae-In's election as president turned the page on a bad decade for press freedom. North Asia's democracies are struggling to defend their models against an all-powerful China that shamelessly exports its methods for silencing all criticism. Cambodia (142nd) seems dangerously inclined to take the same path as China after closing dozens of independent media outlets and plunging ten places, one of the biggest falls in the region (see our regional analysis [Asia-Pacific democracies threatened by China's media control model](#)).

The former Soviet countries and Turkey continue to lead the worldwide decline in press freedom (see our regional analysis [Historic decline in press freedom in ex-Soviet states, Turkey](#)). Almost two-thirds of the region's countries are ranked somewhere near or below the 150th position in the Index and most are continuing to fall. They include Kyrgyzstan (98th), which registered one of the Index's biggest falls (nine places) after a year with a great deal of harassment of the media including astronomic fines for "insulting the head of state." In light of such a wretched performance, it is no surprise that the region's overall indicator is close to reaching that of Middle East/North Africa.

According to the indicators used to measure the year-by-year changes, it is the Middle East/North Africa region that has registered the biggest decline in Media freedom (see our regional analyses [Middle East riven by conflicts, political clashes](#) and [Journalism sorely tested in North Africa](#)). The continuing wars in Syria (117th) and Yemen (down one at 167th) and the terrorism charges still being used in Egypt (161st), Saudi Arabia (down one at 169th) and Bahrain (down two at 166th) continue to make this the most difficult and dangerous region for journalists to operate.

Published annually by RSF since 2002, the World Press Freedom Index measures the level of media freedom in 180 countries, including the level of pluralism, media independence, the environment and self-censorship, the legal framework, transparency, and the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information. It does not evaluate government policy.

The global indicator and the regional indicators are calculated on the basis of the scores assigned to each country. These country scores are calculated from answers to a questionnaire in 20 languages that is completed by experts around the world, supported by a qualitative analysis. The scores and

indicators measure constraints and violations, so the higher the figure, the worse the situation. Because of growing awareness of the Index, it is an extremely useful advocacy tool.

Importance to travel & tourism

Travel & tourism has had a rocky relationship with the media which is always attacked for biased reporting, playing up bad news, giving destinations a negative image, etc., etc. However, a free and vibrant media plays an important role in exposing many of the wrongs across travel & tourism, such as fraud, scams, corruption, poor destination management, etc. For better or for worse, travel & tourism has a deep and vested interest in ensuring the survival of free, democratic media. Supporting professional media outlets should be a priority.

LEAD STORY 4

‘Instead of responding to crises, we need to invest far more in prevention,’ says UN chief



Under the watchful eyes of the UN peacekeeping mission known as MINUSCA, voting takes place in Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic, on a constitutional referendum meant to help stabilize the country. Photo: MINUSCA

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 5 March 2018 - The imbalance between spending on conflict, and spending on peace, must be tackled head-on, Secretary-General António Guterres said Monday, urging the United Nations to rally all international actors “for our efforts across the peace continuum – from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and sustainable long-term development.”

“Two years ago, the General Assembly and the Security Council came together to send a clear joint message: while Member States have primary responsibility for building and maintaining peace, we can all do more to strengthen the foundations of stability, wellbeing and cohesion,” he told an informal gathering of the Assembly where he presented his report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

Noting that the UN must offer “coherent, comprehensive and integrated support, working with Member States and other partners, before, during, and after conflict,” he informed the room that his report puts these messages into practice.

He discussed how inclusive and sustainable development makes a critical contribution to conflict prevention.

“Sustaining peace is both a goal and a process that relies on building a common and cohesive vision of a society that takes the needs of all into account,” he stated, noting that “the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our global path to a safer, more sustainable and resilient world.”

Mr. Guterres stressed that gender considerations must remain front and centre in all efforts to sustain peace, noting that the importance and effectiveness of women's leadership and participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding are not in doubt.

"We need to increase women's representation in a systematic and meaningful way that goes far beyond tokenism. Women must be in decision-making roles at all levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict," he said.

Importance to travel & tourism

One of the major challenges in travel & tourism is cost cutting. The United Nations is saying that preventing conflicts and crisis is the best form of cost-cutting at a global level. The tax-paying public all over the world pays both the costs and the price of conflicts. If they can be avoided and prevented, the billions of dollars saved could be diverted to far more productive purposes, such as advancing the UN SDGS. Like the famous adage: A stitch in time saves nine.

LEAD STORY 5

No “fancy suits and long speeches” at a new type of UN conference



*Participants at the 2018 Global Festival of Action for Sustainable Development, in Bonn, Germany.
SDG Action Campaign*

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 23 March 2018 - A United Nations forum showcasing the latest innovations, tools and approaches that will make sustainable development a reality wrapped up in Bonn, Germany, on Friday.

Some 1,500 participants from more than 100 countries attended the three-day [Global Festival of Action for Sustainable Development](#).

The gathering sought to inspire action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) aimed at ending extreme poverty and hunger while also ensuring a healthy environment for all people and the planet.

Billed as “a new type of UN conference” devoid of “fancy suits and long speeches,” the festival featured various immersive experiences such as a virtual reality zone showing the human stories behind development challenges, in addition to workshops, demo sessions and film screenings.

Those who could not travel to Bonn were encouraged to follow the activities on UN Web TV and social media, with more than 30,000 watching the livestream while #SDGglobalFest trended across the world.

Among the festival highlights was the presentation of the [UN SDG Action Awards](#), celebrating individuals and organizations from all regions who are working to implement the 17 goals, which have a deadline of 2030.

The awards covered seven categories, including mobilizer, storyteller and connector.

“I’m going to learn from these seven other people to create a movement and change the world,” said one of the winners, Foluke Michael of Nigeria, founder of Creative Youth Initiative Against Corruption, speaking at the closing ceremony.

His organization won the innovator category for its “Corruption Busters” campaign which targeted the general public and focused on corrupt practices associated with everyday life and how they have an impact on individuals and society.

This was the second edition of the Global Festival of Action for Sustainable Development which was hosted by the [UN SDG Action Campaign](#) with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Discussions revolved around five main key themes: innovative approaches, citizen engagement, communicating the SDGs, mobilizing action, and multi-stakeholder engagement.

“The world is facing tremendous challenges, and for the first time there is an innovative plan to solve them,” said Mitchell Toomey, the Global Director of the UN SDG Action Campaign.

“But we can’t do this alone, we need everyone to be part of it. We are very excited to once more bring together different key players from governments, civil society, UN agencies, cities, business, and academia in this dynamic, inclusive and innovative festival.”

Importance to travel & tourism

Travel and tourism, too, needs “a new type of conference” devoid of “fancy suits and long speeches.” Industry events have degenerated into mutual admiration clubs of people preaching to the converted. In the tech world, 3D stands for 3-Dimension and OTA stands for Online Travel Agents. Both need to be redefined: 3D = Dissent, Debate and Democratise. OTA = Openness, Transparency and Accountability. If travel & tourism conferences are redefined accordingly, they could become far more productive and intellectually nourishing than they currently are.



SDG 1: UN forum to spotlight ways ICT can help beat poverty





*Young people participating in a “Hack for Health” event at the 2017 World Summit on the Information Society.
ITU/R. Farrell*



SDG 1: UN forum to spotlight ways ICT can help beat poverty

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 19 March 2018 - Making information and communication technology (ICT) readily available for vulnerable countries and harnessing its potential to help tackle a raft of ills – from disaster risk reduction to reaching ‘zero hunger’ – will be among the issues on the agenda at an annual United Nations information forum that kicked off Monday in Geneva.

From building vibrant information and communication technology (ICT)-centric ecosystems to harnessing their potential for disaster risk reduction, the annual United Nations forum on information kicked off Monday – exploring a range of compelling possibilities to meet sustainable development challenges.

More than 2,500 ICT experts from around the globe have assembled at International Telecommunication Union (ITU) headquarters in Geneva for the [World Summit on the Information Society](#) (WSIS) Forum seeking to bring benefits to everyone, everywhere.

“[The WSIS Forum] is our [common platform](#) to review the achievements of [information and communication technology] developments, to discuss the challenges and opportunities, to showcase innovation and to share best practices,” said ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao.

Innovative projects showcase ICT solutions in areas as diverse and critical as the ‘Internet of Things’ for development, e-agriculture, information accessibility, cybersecurity, virtual reality (VR) and education, autonomous robots, gender empowerment, and the implementation of WSIS [Action Lines](#) – a framework for worldwide action on ICTs – towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On site, “ICT Solutions for SDGs” will include drones for social development, robotics, artificial intelligence – and VR experiences.

Cyber nuts and bolts

This year’s WSIS has raised the spotlight on how ICTs can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including with a new [Youth in ICTs](#) track to leverage the skills of young people aged 18-35.

In a [Cloud Café](#), youth and subject-area experts will exchange knowledge to advance the UN’s work while a [Vloggers for SDGs](#) session will discuss how YouTube has changed the way development organizations communicate with the public, including the rise of video blogging or Vlogging.

An [innovation track](#) called Accelerating Digital Transformation: Building Vibrant ICT Centric Innovation Ecosystems, provides a unique opportunity to build high-level dialogue, cooperation and partnership and identify good practices to support innovation ecosystems and funding policy for sustainable ICT projects.

For the second-annual global Hackathon, called [#HackAgainstHunger](#), the ITU, [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) and Impact Hub Geneva assembled more than 75 coders, food and agriculture experts and innovators to develop new ICT solutions to end world hunger.

During the Forum, [WSIS Prizes](#) will be awarded to recognize outstanding projects supporting the SDGs. Winners, or WSIS Champions, will play a key role in engaging global and grassroots community in online and community advocacy going forward.

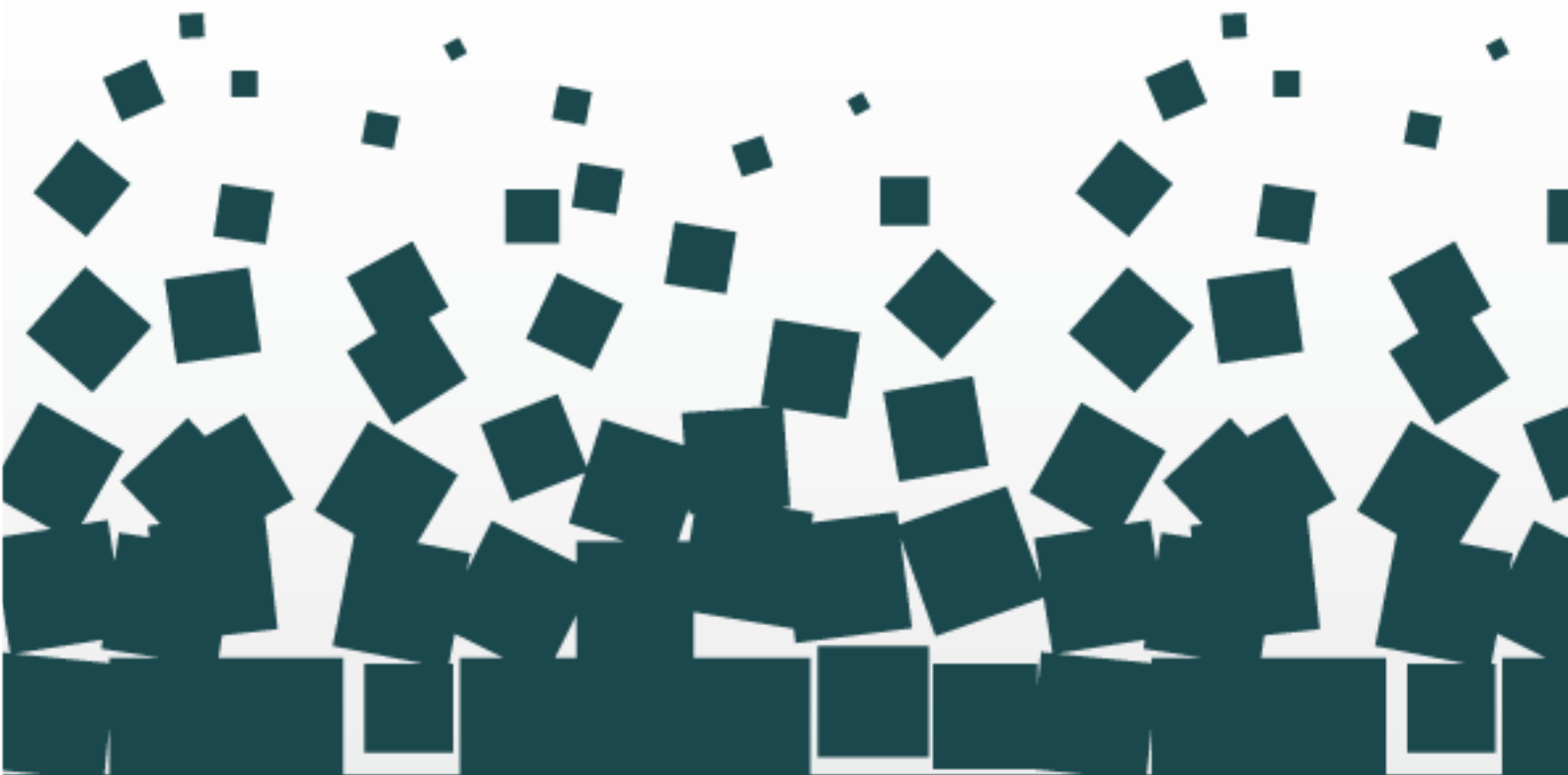
This year’s forum marks 15 years since the first Summit was held in Geneva, demonstrating that the foundations of a “just and equal information society” set by the Geneva Plan of Action in 2003 are still crucial to all WSIS stakeholders.

Importance to travel & tourism

The I.T. revolution has elevated travel & tourism to a higher level than any other industry. But it has been used nearly entirely to grow the business, not on managing its wide-ranging social, cultural and environmental impact. That imbalance is now in need of serious rectification.



SDG 2: Conflict main driver of global hunger, food insecurity





Women wait with their children to be examined and possibly give supplementary food at a mobile clinic run by UNICEF in the village of Rubkuai, Unity State, South Sudan. February 2017. UNICEF/Modola



SDG 2: Conflict main driver of global hunger, food insecurity

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 23 March 2018 - Hunger is on the rise worldwide mainly because “people won’t stop shooting at each other,” the head of the United Nations food relief agency said Friday, telling the Security Council that if it did more to break the link between conflict and hunger, countless lives could be saved.

David Beasley, the head of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) told the 15-member body that resolving conflicts and ensuring peace are indispensable to achieve food security.

That link, he underscored, is both strong and highly destructive.

“If you don’t know where your child’s next meal is coming from, you may be forced to make impossible choices,” he said, noting that for one per cent rise in the rate of hunger, there is a two per cent increase in migration.

Speaking via videoconference from Biel, Switzerland, he called on the Council to help end war and stressed that the price of programmes to tackle the root causes of hunger is far cheaper than the cost of the current conflict cycle.

WFP can save one billion dollars a year if all armed groups respected international humanitarian Law and provided unimpeded access to civilian populations, explained Mr. Beasley.

Briefing the Council alongside the WFP chief, Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, explained that almost two-thirds of the world’s hungry live in conflict-torn countries.

“Conflict – often conflated with extreme climatic shock and high prices of staple food – is the main driver of global food insecurity,” he added, speaking via videoconference from Dublin.

On top of this, the conduct of combatants worsens the situation with their actions – contrary to international law – resulting in damage and destruction of water systems, farms, livestock and markets.

It is, therefore, crucial that all States ensure that international humanitarian law is respected by parties to conflict as per their obligation to

do so, said Mr. Lowcock, calling on the Security Council to investigate violations of international law and ensure that those who violate it are held accountable.

“This Council’s main responsibility is peace and international security. In other words, this Council can help prevent famine to ever occur again,” he stressed.

Importance to travel & tourism

In the travel & tourism industry, like all businesses, an over-arching business mantra is cost-cutting. At the global geopolitical level, ending war and conflicts is the most sublime form of cost-cutting. If one billion dollars a year can be saved just by having all armed groups respect international humanitarian Law and provided unimpeded access to civilian populations, as Mr. Beasley says, how many more billions could be saved by preventing the conflict in the first place.



SDG 5: UN rural development agency invests in power and potential of women





*Two women, members of an IFAD-supported leasehold forestry community project in Dadeldhura, western Nepal.
IFAD/Irshad Khan*



SDG 5: UN rural development agency invests in power and potential of women

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 20 March 2018 - Although rural women make up one-fifth of the global population and around 43 per cent of all agricultural workers, inequality restricts their access to land, markets or even the training and technology that could improve their lives and livelihoods, according to the United Nations agency fighting to stamp out hunger and poverty.

The Rome-based International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)) believes promoting gender equality is critical to reducing rural poverty and ensuring that all people have enough to eat.

“I think if poverty had a face, it would be the face of a rural woman,” IFAD’s newly-appointed vice-president Cornelia Richter told UN News.

“Women are producers of nutrition, and there is a lot of potential. Women are not only victims: they also bear the changes and challenges of development, and I think we in IFAD are trying to invest in the potential of women and not victimizing women.”

Overall, some three billion people – roughly 40 per cent of the planet – live in rural areas of developing countries. Although they grow the food that feeds their nations, most are living in extreme poverty.

IFAD believes investing in these people benefits all people. That’s because global challenges such as hunger, poverty, youth unemployment and forced migration, are rooted in rural areas.

Therefore, investing in small-scale agriculture and rural development could have far-reaching impact.

For Ms. Richter, women are central to any effort to improve these communities.

“I can’t imagine any kind of development without women,” she stated.

Since 1946, the UN Commission on the Status of Women ([CSW](#)) has been shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Its latest session, currently underway at UN Headquarters, focuses on the challenges facing rural women and girls.

In her [opening address](#), the head of [UN Women](#), the UN agency working to advance gender equality, challenged participants to find solutions that support this group.

“Women in rural areas need innovative technology and connectivity; infrastructure that brings sanitation, clean drinking water, energy and transport, and that supports productivity and mobility,” UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka told delegates.

“They need access to credit, climate justice, markets and high-value agrifood chains. They need an end to discriminatory laws and norms that sustain harmful cultural practices like female genital mutilation and early and forced marriages. They need respect for sexual and reproductive health and rights. And they need an end to violence in all its forms.”

Ms. Richter also took part in this year’s session of the Commission which dovetails with her agency’s priorities.

She said IFAD understands that “a holistic approach” is the only way to transform the lives of rural women.

“This means that we cannot only address one single topic: for example, education, or law enforcement. We have to come up with a well-designed approach where we address the different levels by which women and girls are hampered,” she explained.

Ms. Richter believes dismantling legal barriers that affect women is a good place to start.

For example, according to IFAD, poor rural people – especially women, youth, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups – generally have weak or unprotected land tenure rights, putting them at risk of losing access to what is often their only source of security.

“We also have to make sure that we strengthen rural institutions and invest in capacity development in order to create more advocacy for rural women and girls,” Ms. Richter continued.

“And then, I think at the beginning of development is the empowerment of women. How do we empower women? Through education. And education in the 21st century can’t happen without investing in new technologies.”

A recent IFAD-supported project ensured that more than 2,000 women smallholder farmers in Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda had access to modern technology. The women received mobile phones and radios, which they used to share information on agricultural practices but also to learn about gender issues.

This is just one example of how IFAD grants and low-interest loans have reached more than 460 million people over the past four decades.

Going forward, Ms. Richter sees the UN agency expanding its field presence.

Although she joined IFAD in February, she spent more than two decades in managerial positions with German development cooperation agencies, in a career that took her to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

“I would like to support IFAD in its very clear mandate and also provide strategic direction in a very ambitious reform agenda on which IFAD is embarking in order to achieve more efficiency in the field, which is a very clear commitment and expectation from our member States,” she said.

“So, you will find more IFAD offices in the coming months and years.”

Importance to travel & tourism

As agri-tourism is now the current rage, extending the role of women in agriculture to a prominent role in travel & tourism is a natural. By lifting even more women out of poverty, and opening up more opportunities for women entrepreneurs, it could halve the time frame for achieving the UN SDGs.



SDG 5: UN Commission delivers blueprint to ensure rights and development of rural women and girls





Participants at the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women rejoice as the Commission adopts Agreed Conclusions to ensure the rights and development of rural women and girls. UN Women/Ryan Brown



SDG 5: UN Commission delivers blueprint to ensure rights and development of rural women and girls

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 24 March 2018
- The United Nations' largest annual gathering on gender equality and women's rights wrapped up Friday in New York with the strong commitment by its Member States to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

Coming on the heels of unprecedented global activism and public outcry to end gender injustice and discrimination worldwide, the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women ([CSW](#)) reached a robust agreement highlighting the urgency of empowering and supporting those who need it most and have, for too long, been left behind.

The outcome of the two-week meeting, known as the Agreed Conclusions adopted by Member States, puts forth concrete measures to lift rural women and girls out of poverty and to ensure their rights, well-being and resilience.

These include ensuring their adequate living standards with equal access to land and productive assets, ending poverty, enhancing their food security and nutrition, decent work, infrastructure and technology, education and health, including their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and ending all forms of violence and harmful practices.

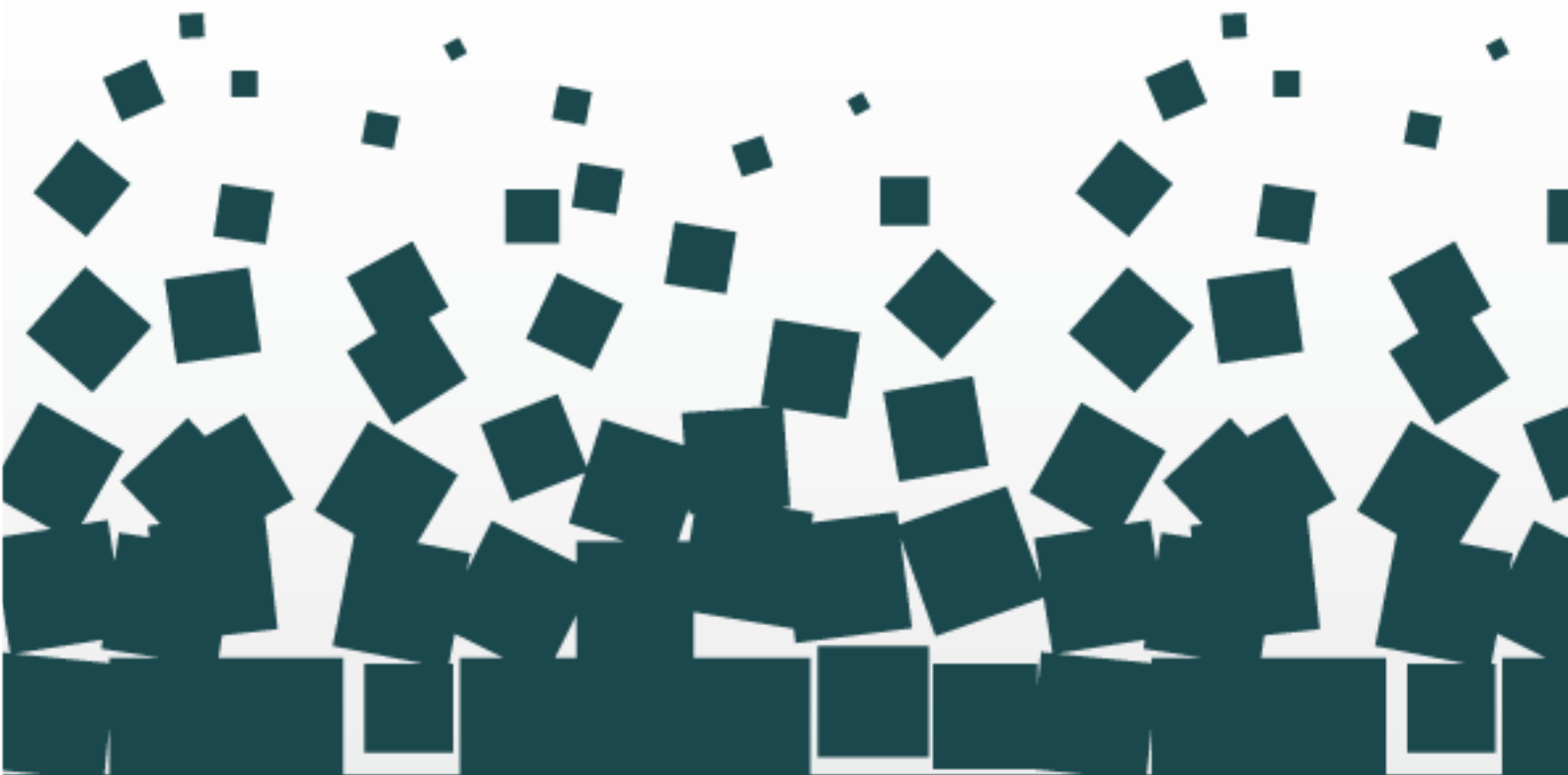
Please read the full wrap up of CSW62 from UN Women [here](#).

Importance to travel & tourism

The role of women in travel and tourism has never been comprehensively discussed. Women are the bedrock of the entire industry, and face serious challenges especially in attaining a work-life balance. It's more than just a question of achieving a gender balance. A better overall balance is needed.



SDG 6: UN-World Bank panel calls for ‘fundamental shift’ in water management





Child drinks water from a water-pipe. (file), Imal Hashemi/Taimani Films/World Bank



SDG 6: UN-World Bank panel calls for 'fundamental shift' in water management

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 14 March 2018 - With 700 million people worldwide at risk of being displaced by intense water scarcity by 2030, water infrastructure investment must be at least doubled over the next five years, a panel set up by the United Nations and the World Bank recommended on Wednesday.

Making Every Drop Count: An Agenda for Water Action, released by a [panel](#) of 11 Heads of State and a Special Advisor, calls for a fundamental shift in the way the world manages water so that the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), particularly [Goal 6](#) on ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, can be achieved.

According to the [report](#), 40 per cent of the world's people are being affected by water scarcity. If not addressed, as many as 700 million could be displaced by 2030 in search for water. More than two billion people are compelled to drink unsafe water and more than 4.5 billion do not have safely managed sanitation services.

The report says women and girls suffer disproportionately when water and sanitation are lacking, affecting health and often restricting work and education opportunities. Some 80 per cent of wastewater is discharged untreated into the environment and water-related disasters account for 90 per cent of the 1,000 most devastating natural disasters since 1990.

"It is my deep belief that water is a matter of life and death," UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) commented upon receiving the report on Wednesday, noting that 60 per cent of human body is water.

He said that water-related natural disasters are occurring more frequently and becoming more and more dangerous everywhere, which means “water is indeed a matter of life and death” and “must be an absolute priority in everything we do.”

In a press release, World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim stressed that Heads of State and Government make up the panel “because the world can no longer afford to take water for granted.”



The Laghman River, one of Afghanistan's many waterways, is essential to agriculture and other development in this largely rural eastern province.
Fardin Waezi/UNAMA

“The ecosystems on which life itself is based – our food security, energy sustainability, public health, jobs, cities – are all at risk because of how water is managed today,” he warned.

The panel, created in 2016 for an initial period of two years, is advocating for evidence-based policies and innovative approaches at the global, national and local level to make water management as well as water and sanitation services attractive for investment and more disaster-resilient.

The panel calls for policies that will allow for at least a doubling of investment in water infrastructure in the next five years.

The report also highlights the essential need for partnerships between Governments, communities, the private sector and researchers.

The members of the panel are Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, Mauritius' President (Co-Chair); Enrique Peña Nieto, Mexico's President (Co-Chair); Malcolm Turnbull, Australia's Prime Minister; Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh's Prime Minister; János Áder, Hungary's President; Hani Mulki, Jordan's Prime Minister; Mark Rutte, Netherlands' Prime Minister; Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard, Peru's President; Jacob Zuma, South Africa's President; Macky Sall, Senegal's President; Emomali Rahmon, Tajikistan's President; and Han Seung-soo, Special Advisor and former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea.

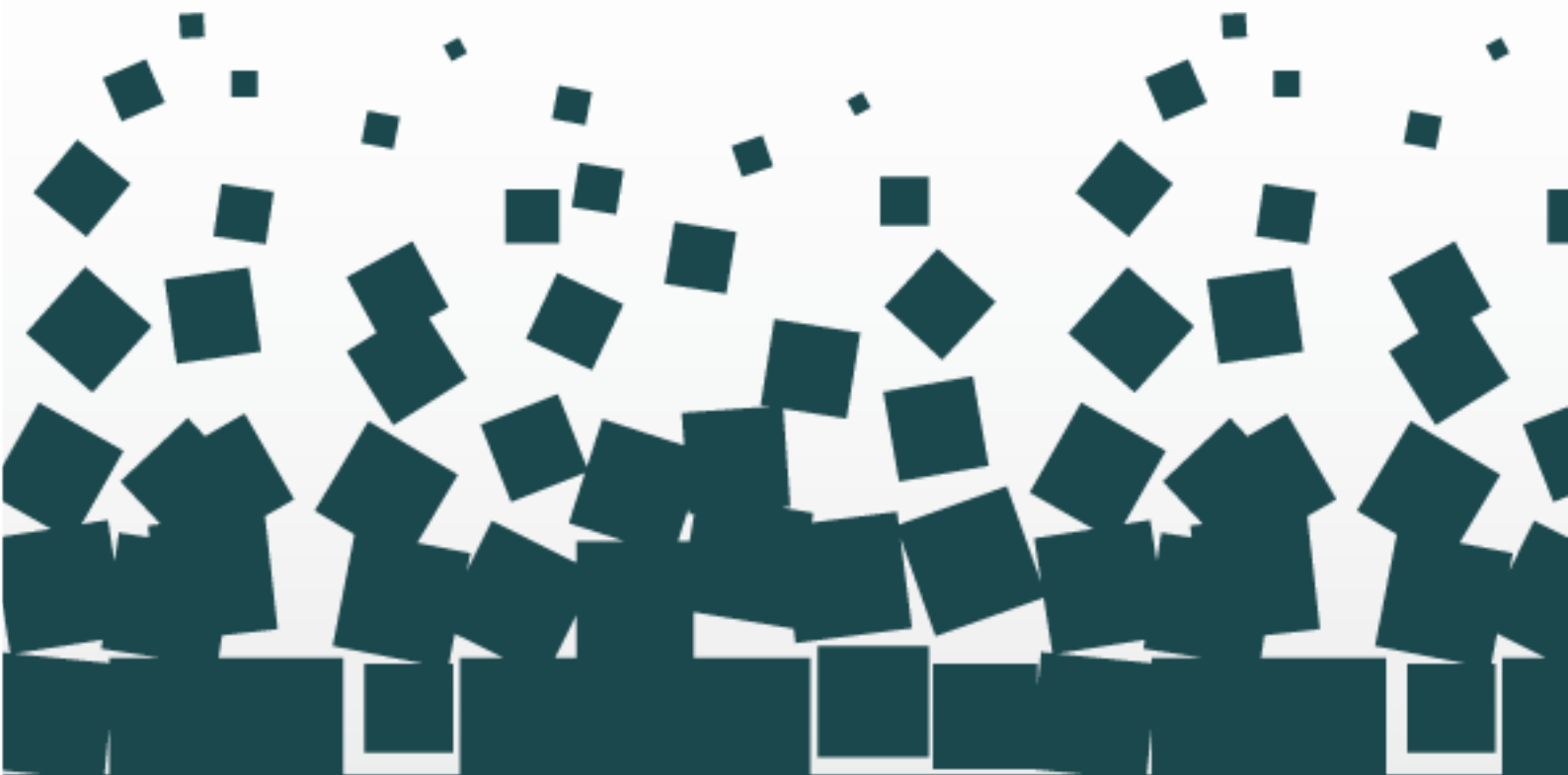
In an open letter, they conclude: “Whoever you are, whatever you do, wherever you live, we urge you get involved, and contribute to meeting this great challenge: safe water and sanitation for all, and our water resources managed sustainably. Make every drop count. It's time for action.”

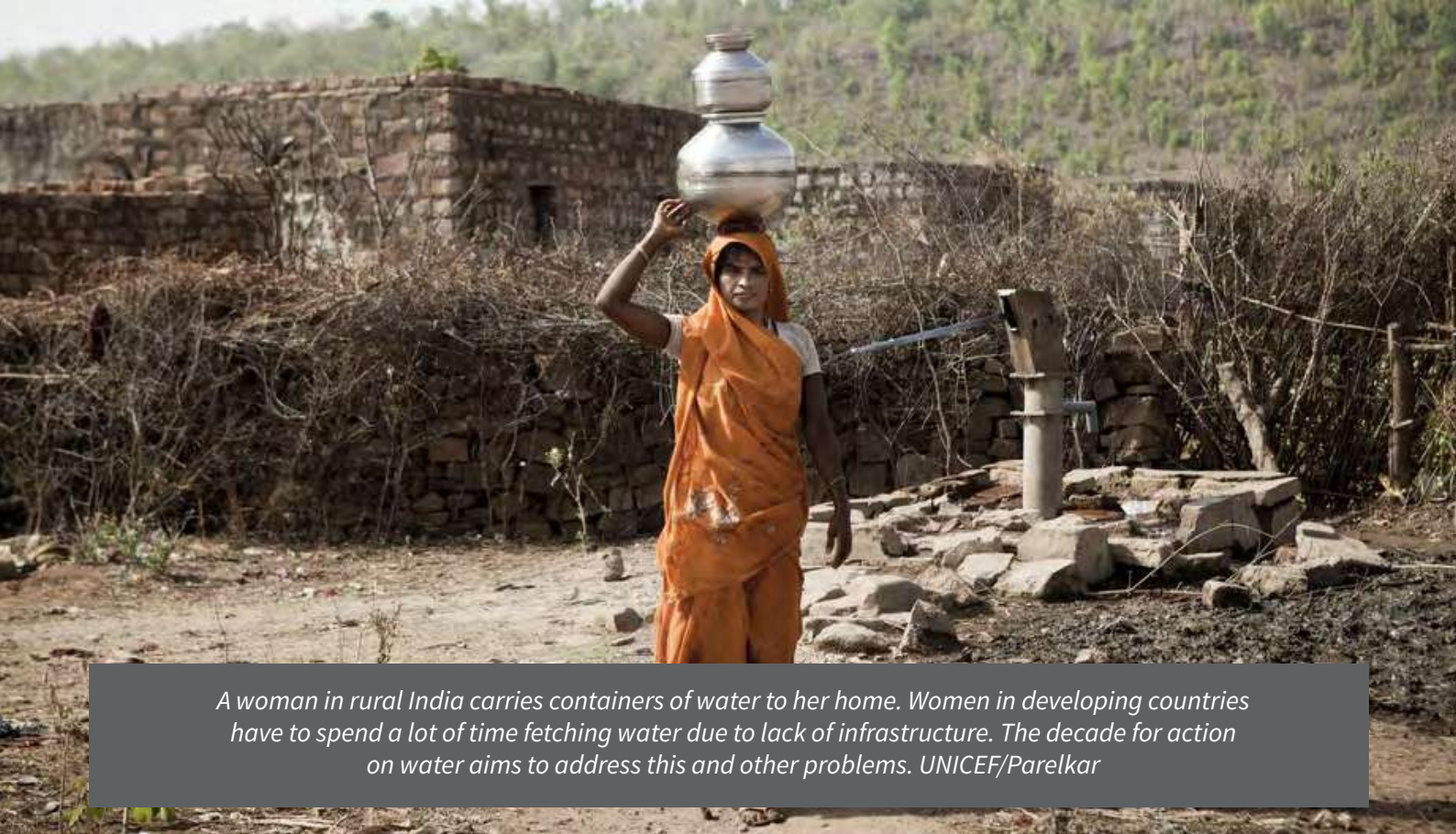
Importance to travel & tourism

Water is a matter of life and death, says the UN Secretary General. How true. And yet, there is no estimate on how much water is consumed by the travelling billions, both domestic and foreign. Certainly, consumption would be much higher than local residents. If over-tourism is becoming an increasing problem, over-consumption is a corollary challenge, especially water.



SDG 6: Poverty forces women, girls to spend 40 billion hours a year collecting water





A woman in rural India carries containers of water to her home. Women in developing countries have to spend a lot of time fetching water due to lack of infrastructure. The decade for action on water aims to address this and other problems. UNICEF/Parekar



SDG 6: Poverty forces women, girls to spend 40 billion hours a year collecting water

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 22 March 2018
- The United Nations on Thursday launched a 10-year water action plan that seeks to forge new partnerships, improve cooperation and strengthen capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Most directly linked to [Sustainable Development Goal 6](#), safe water and adequate sanitation are indispensable for healthy ecosystems, reducing poverty, and achieving inclusive growth, social well-being and sustainable livelihoods – the targets for many of the 17 Goals.

However, growing demands, poor management and climate change have increased water stresses and scarcity of water is a major problem in many parts of the world.

Furthermore, more than two billion people worldwide lack access to safe water and over 4.5 billion to adequate sanitation services, warned UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#).

“By 2050 at least one in four people will live in a country where the lack of fresh water will be chronic or recurrent,” he said, speaking at the [launch](#) of the International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028.

“[Quite simply, water is a matter of life and death](#). Our bodies, [...] our cities, our industries and our agriculture all depend on it.”

Stressing that water cannot be taken for granted, the UN chief said that while solutions and technologies to improve water management exist, these are often not accessible to all. In many cases, end up perpetrating inequity within and among countries.

“As with most development challenges, women and girls suffer disproportionately. For example, women and girls in low-income countries spend some 40 billion hours a year collecting water,” he stressed.

Addressing these and other challenges needs a comprehensive approach to water supply, sanitation, water management and disaster risk reduction, said the UN chief, highlighting that aligning existing water and sanitation programmes and projects with the 2030 Agenda will also be vital.

Also crucial is the political will for strengthened cooperation and partnerships, he added.



*Secretary-General António Guterres (left) makes remarks during the high-level event to launch the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028".
UN Photo/Manuel Elias*

Two realities – one where no one goes thirsty; other where billions don't have water to drink

Alongside the Secretary-General, Mahmoud Saikal, the Vice-President of the General Assembly (speaking on behalf of Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák) said that while many in the world have adequate safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, billions on the same planet lack even a basic toilet and are forced to drink water that can make them ill.

"This is the reality we all have to face. It is not pretty. But, it should not come as a surprise. We have known about it for a while," he said.

"Luckily, we still have enough time to do something about it," added Mr. Saikal, calling on for action on everyone's part to capitalize on the opportunities offered by the International Decade.

▪ **Learn more about the International Decade here:** <http://www.wateractiondecade.org/>

Water problems? The answer is in nature

The launch of the International Decade coincides with the [World Water Day](#), marked annually on 22 March, to focus attention to importance of and challenges facing freshwater availability.

Commemorated this year with the theme, Nature for Water, the Day [urges](#) people to explore nature-based solutions to contemporary water problems.

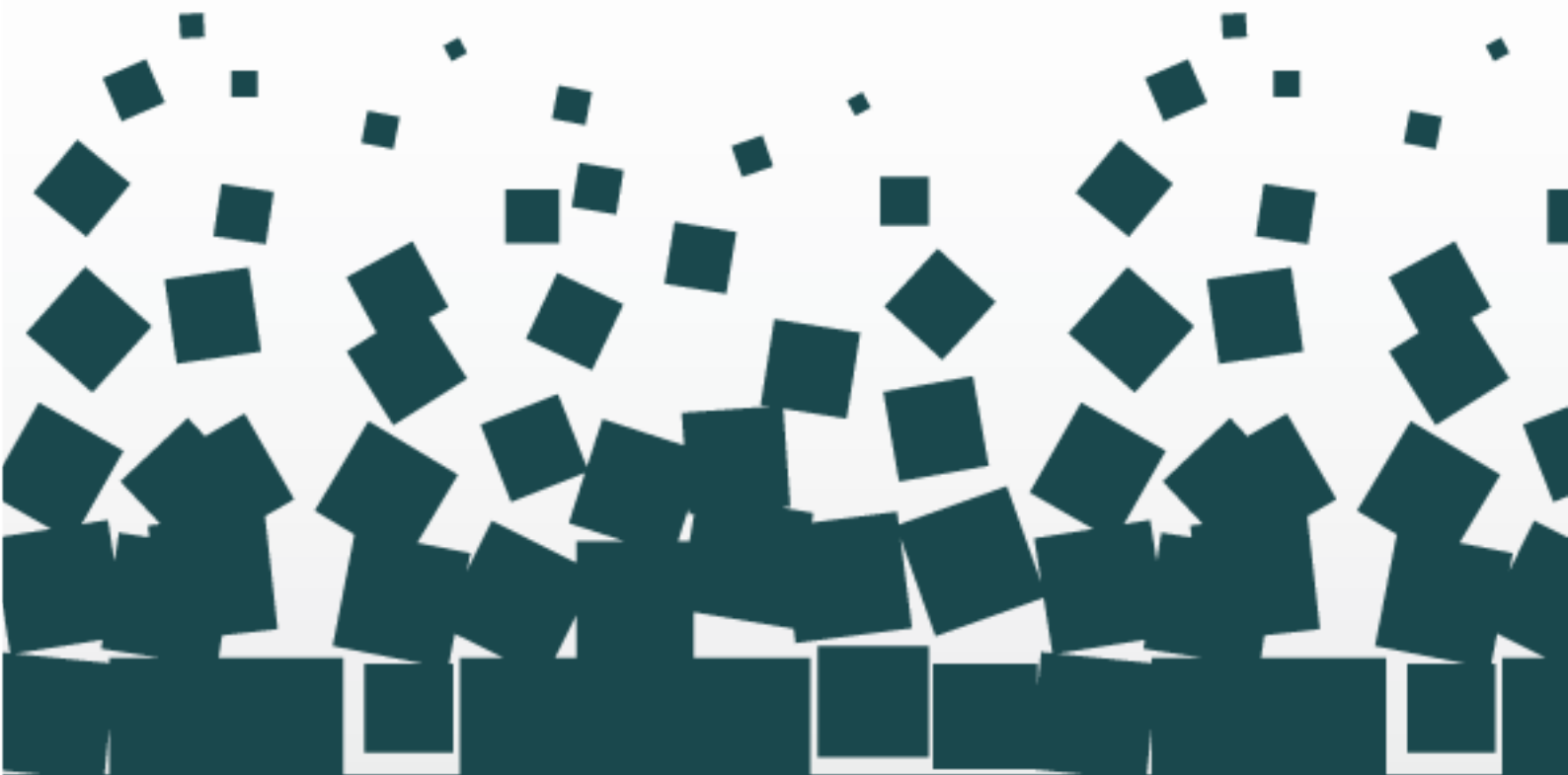
Some of these could include planting trees and increasing forest cover, reconnecting rivers to floodplains, and restoring wetlands to rebalance the water cycle.

Importance to travel & tourism

The way the travel & tourism industry is designed could do with a significant overhaul to make it more environmentally friendly across the board. Water management is a critical component of that effort, as the next story indicates.



SDG 6: Rainwater recycling, artificial wetlands among 'green' solutions to global water crisis





The Laghman River, one of Afghanistan's many waterways, is essential to agriculture and other development in this largely rural eastern province. Fardin Waezi/UNAMA



SDG 6: Rainwater recycling, artificial wetlands among 'green' solutions to global water crisis

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 19 March 2018 - With five billion people at risk of having difficulty accessing adequate water by 2050, finding nature-based solutions, such as China's rainwater recycling, India's forest regeneration and Ukraine's artificial wetlands, is becoming increasingly important, according to a United Nations report released Monday at the world's largest water-related event in Brazil.

"We need new solutions in managing water resources so as to meet emerging challenges to water security caused by population growth and climate change," said Audrey Azoulay, head of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), in the foreword of the [UN World Water Development Report 2018](#).

"If we do nothing, some five billion people will be living in areas with poor access to water by 2050," she added.

[Goal 6](#) of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) adopted by world leaders in 2015 seeks to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all and, also access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all by 2030.

The report notes that the global demand for water has been increasing and will continue to grow significantly over the next two decades due to population growth, economic development and changing consumption patterns.

Due to climate change, wetter regions are becoming wetter, and drier regions are becoming even drier. At present, an estimated 3.6 billion people, nearly half the global population, live in areas potentially water-scarce at least one month per year, and this population could increase to some 4.8 billion to 5.7 billion by 2050.

The number of people at risk from floods is projected to rise from 1.2 billion today to around 1.6 billion in 2050, nearly 20 per cent of the world's population. The population currently affected by land degradation, desertification and drought is estimated at 1.8 billion people, making this the worst natural disaster based on mortality and socio-economic impact relative to gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.

The UNESCO Director-General said the report proposes solutions that are based on nature to manage water better.

The report notes that reservoirs, irrigation canals and water treatment plants are not the only water management instruments at disposal.

So-called 'green' infrastructure, as opposed to traditional 'grey' infrastructure, focuses on preserving the functions of ecosystems, both natural and built, and environmental engineering rather than civil engineering to improve the management of water resources, the report says.

In 1986, the province of Rajasthan in India experienced one of the worst droughts in its history. Over the following years, a non-governmental organization worked alongside local communities to regenerate soils and forests in the region by setting up water harvesting structures. This led to a 30 per cent increase in forest cover, groundwater levels rose by several metres and cropland productivity improved.



A wastewater treatment facility in Manila, the Philippines. Danilo Pinzon/World Bank

China's Sponge City aims to recycle 70 per cent of rainwater

Faced with an ever-increasing demand for water, China recently initiated a project, entitled 'Sponge City,' to improve water availability in urban settlements with the aim of recycling 70 per cent of rainwater.

Over recent years, Ukraine has been experimenting artificial wetlands to filter some pharmaceutical products from wastewater based on evidence that wetlands alone can remove 20 to 60 per cent of metals in water and trap 80 to 90 per cent of sediment from runoff.

“For too long, the world has turned first to human-built, or ‘grey,’ infrastructure to improve water management. In so doing, it has often brushed aside traditional and indigenous knowledge that embraces greener approaches,” writes Gilbert Hounbo, Chair of UN-Water and President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)) in the foreword of the report.

Despite emerging initiatives, the use of nature-based solutions remains marginal and almost all investments are still channelled to grey infrastructure projects, the report points out.

The report is the fruit of collaboration between the 31 UN entities and 39 international partners that comprise [UN-Water](#).

The report, whose publication coincides with [World Water Day](#) annually observed on 22 March, was presented at the [World Water Forum](#), which kicked off Monday and runs through Friday in Brasilia.

The Forum aims “to promote awareness, build political commitment and trigger action on critical water issues at all levels.”

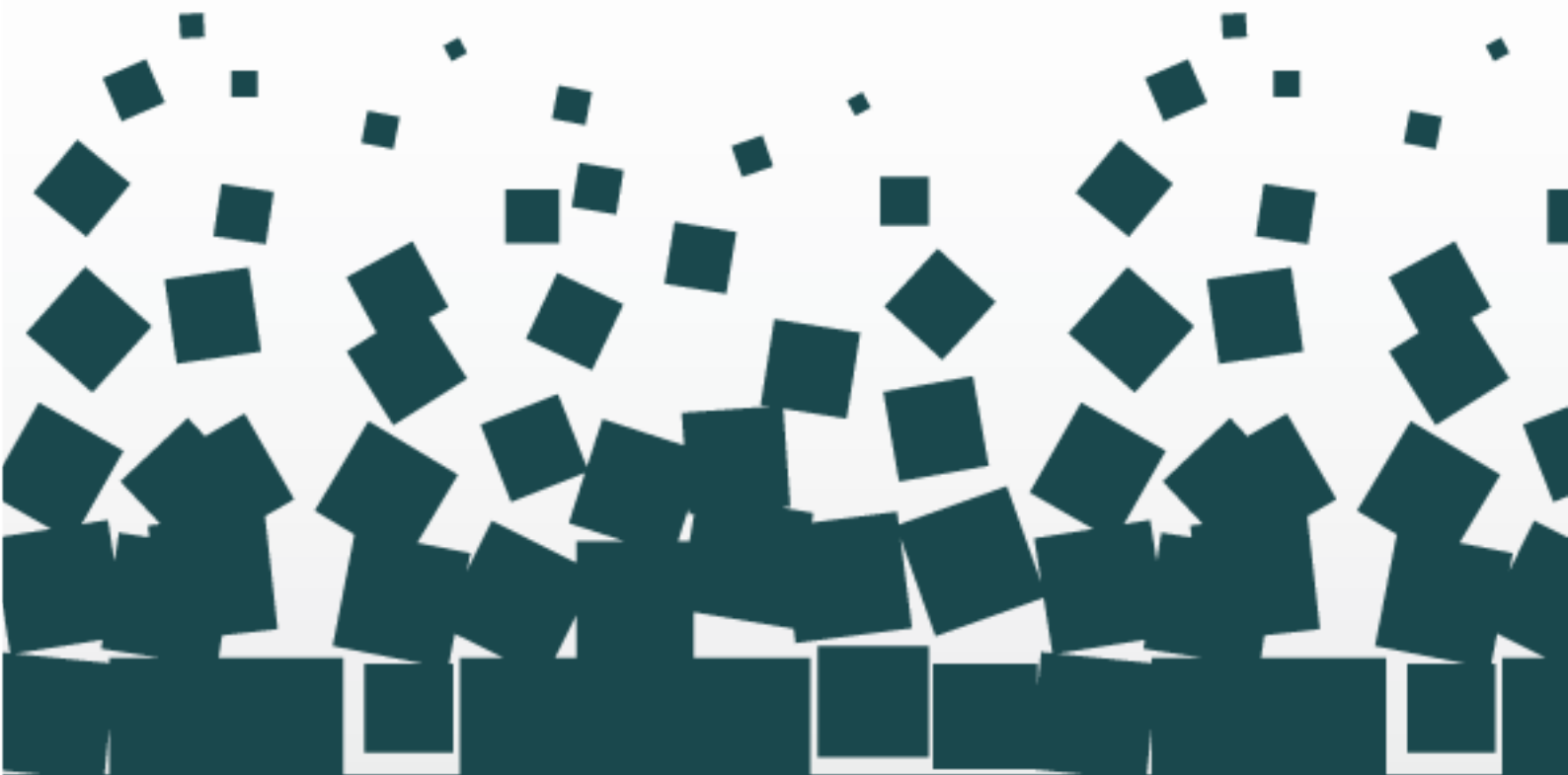
Also on 22 March, the UN will launch the [International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development 2018 to 2028](#), which aims to further improve cooperation and capacity-building towards the SDGs.

Importance to travel & tourism

The International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development gives travel & tourism a golden opportunity to become a part of the solution. A lot can be done, in a quantifiable, measurable way, to improve water management across the board. Getting hotel guests to reduce water consumption and recycling towels is not going to be enough.



SDG 6: Studying water scarcity trends, helping communities adapt can ease migration pressures





A person 'digs' for water at a dry riverbed in eastern Kenya. Flore de Preneuf/World Bank



SDG 6: Studying water scarcity trends, helping communities adapt can ease migration pressures

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 20 March 2018 - Water scarcity and poor access to safe water sources pose major challenges for two-thirds of the world's population, the United Nations food security agency said Tuesday, warning that worsening shortages could soon force people to leave their communities.

The worst impacted are those dependent on agriculture, explained José Graziano da Silva, the Director-General of the UN [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), noting that some among them, especially the poorest, may see no alternative to migrate and in search of better livelihoods.

[“Migration should be a choice, and not the only remaining option,”](#) he stressed.

Exploring this intricate linkages in its new report, [Water Stress and Human Migration](#), the UN agency also found that full information on these dynamics is lacking for India, Central Asia, the Middle East and central Sahel – areas expected to be hit with

above-average surface temperature increases and worsening water scarcity in the next 30 years.

Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure coupled with rising temperatures, human demand (such as for agriculture, energy and industrial sectors) and greater rainfall extremes are expected to add to the water stress.

“While some studies demonstrate a correlation between water stress and higher outmigration, the causal interaction is still not clearly understood,” states the report, underscoring the importance to ensure that the water scarcity and migration does not become a case of “mutual aggravation.”

Adapting to water woes can help ease burden

Better adaption strategies, including ones that account for climate change impacts, to mitigate the compulsion to migrate is therefore vital.

“Analyzing water scarcity trends and engaging in preparedness are particularly valuable, allowing time to intervene to mitigate pressure for forced migration,” said Eduardo Mansur, a senior FAO official on water and land issues.

“Enabling proactive adaptation is a more effective and sustainable strategy than offering a reactive humanitarian response in the face of large-scale distress,” he added.

At the same time, the report also highlights that migrants can positively contribute to water management and development in both origin and host communities through good practices, skills and knowledge transfer, and the use of remittances.

In addition, it also calls for increased attention to the concept of environmental migration as well as more data to understand and pre-empt trends in a timely way.

The launch of the report comes ahead of the with [World Water Day](#) observed annually on 22 March as well as the [World Water Forum](#), currently underway in the Brazilian capital, Brasilia.

The theme for this year’s World Water Day is ‘Nature for Water’ which exploring nature-based solutions to present-day water challenges.

Importance to travel & tourism

Water is more than just an environmental issue. It is a civilisational challenge, with widespread ripple-effect impacts on where and how people live. Due to its high per capita consumption level, travel & tourism has no choice but to join the water-saving bandwagon big-time.

7 AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY



SDG7: 98GW of solar energy added in 2017, says UN renewable energy report





A UNEP solar energy system, the largest of its type in Africa. PresseBox.de flickr



SDG 7: 98GW of solar energy added in 2017, says UN renewable energy report

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 5 April 2018 - In 2017, solar energy dominated global investment in new power generation like never before, according to a new United Nations-backed report, which shows a steady move away from fossil fuel-based power production to 'green' power sources.

Last year, the world installed a record 98 gigawatts of new solar capacity, far more than the net additions of the rest – other renewables, fossil fuel and nuclear, according to the [Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2018](#) report, released Thursday by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and its partners.

Solar power also attracted far more investment than any other technology, at \$160.8 billion, up 18 per cent.

A driving power behind last year's surge in solar was China, where an unprecedented boom saw some 53 gigawatts added – more than half the global total – and \$86.5 billion invested, up 58 per cent.

"The extraordinary surge in solar investment shows how the global energy map is changing and, more importantly, what the economic benefits are of such a shift," said UNEP chief Erik Solheim.

"Investments in renewables bring more people into the economy, they deliver more jobs, better quality jobs and better paid jobs. Clean energy also means less pollution, which means healthier, happier development," he said.

Last year was the eighth in a row in which global investment in renewables exceeded \$200 billion – and since 2004, the world has invested \$2.9 trillion in these green energy sources.

Overall, China was by far the world's largest investing country in renewables, at a record \$126.6 billion, up 31 per cent on 2016. There were also sharp increases in investment in Australia, up 147 per cent to \$8.5 billion; Mexico, up 810 per cent to \$6 billion; and Sweden, up 127 per cent to \$3.7 billion.

UN Asia-Pacific forum adopts declaration to accelerate transition to sustainable energy

Meanwhile, countries in the Asia-Pacific region, which is projected to account for two-thirds of global energy use between now and 2040, committed to accelerate the transition to sustainable energy by scaling up their share of renewables, as a United Nations forum in Bangkok wrapped up on Thursday.

“There is a palpable sense of the enormous opportunities ahead that can transform the energy scene,” Shamshad Akhtar, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)), told the two-day forum, acknowledging the growing recognition by governments, the private sector and investors, that a sustainable, low carbon energy system is the only option to safeguard the future.

The highlight of the Second [Asian and Pacific Energy Forum](#) was the adoption of a ministerial declaration, which lays out a series of actions to encourage the sustainable use of energy, including through greater regional cooperation to facilitate cross-border infrastructure and energy trade to advance [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

Watch: Energy Transition Pathways for the 2030 Agenda in Asia-Pacific

<https://youtu.be/cBUqJ3aCfD4>

Organized by ESCAP, the Forum provided a platform for governments, the UN system, private companies, international organizations, and civil society organizations to review the region's implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 7 ([SDG7](#)) on affordable and clean energy.

Delegates concluded that Asia and the Pacific has made remarkable progress on universal access to electricity, with renewable energy surpassing price benchmarks that were only expected in 2020. However, greater efforts are needed throughout the region to achieve targets on reliance on clean fuel and renewable energy, and energy efficiency.

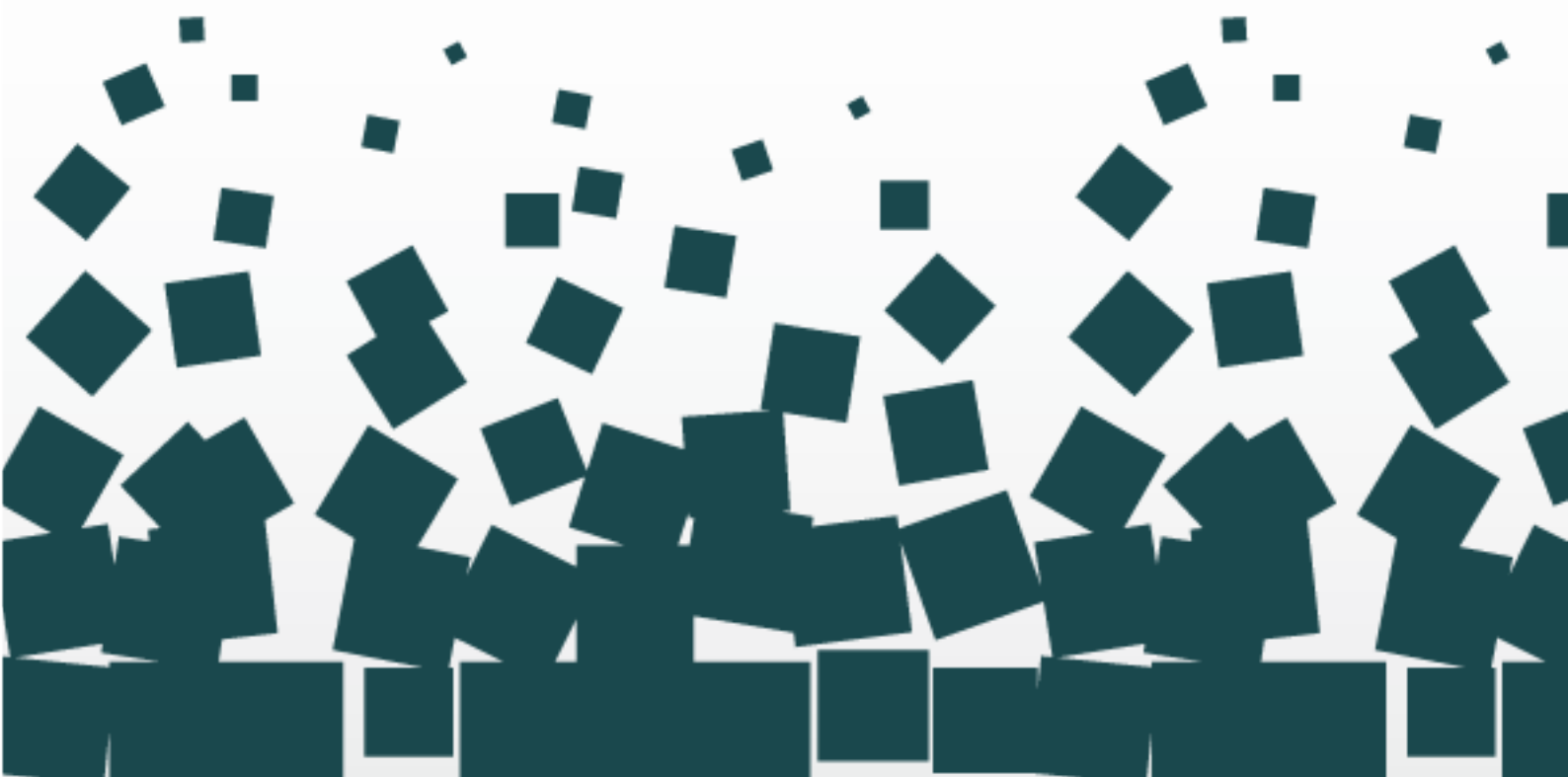
Importance to travel & tourism

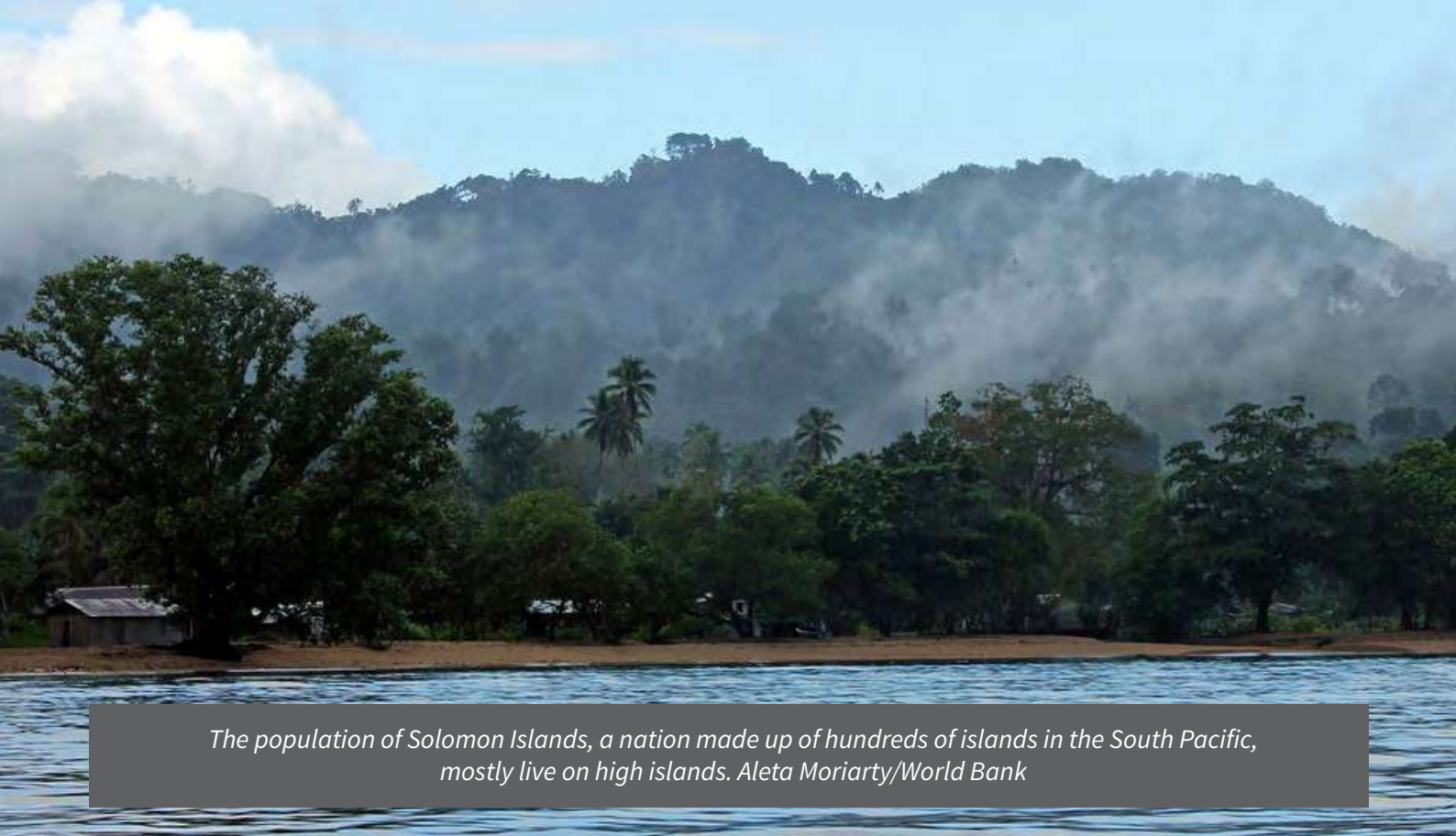
As one of the few industries that depends 100% on the natural environment, travel and tourism is certainly playing a major role in the shift to renewable energies. But the industry has to be careful not to go from the frying pan into the fire. Dependence on imported fossil fuels should not be replaced by dependence on foreign suppliers of alternative energy technologies. Many indigenous forms of energy exist all through Asia and Africa, and deserve to be revived and popularised.

8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH

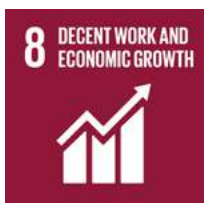


SDG 8: Four countries on track to graduate from UN list of least developed countries





The population of Solomon Islands, a nation made up of hundreds of islands in the South Pacific, mostly live on high islands. Aleta Moriarty/World Bank



SDG 8: Four countries on track to graduate from UN list of least developed countries

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 15 March 2018 - Four countries could soon “graduate” from the ranks of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable nations, a United Nations expert committee [announced](#) on Thursday.

Bhutan, Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe and the Solomon Islands have increased national earning power and improved access to health care and education, making them eligible to exit the group of least developed countries ([LDCs](#)).

“This is an historic occasion,” said Jose Antonio Ocampo, chair of the Committee for Development Policy ([CDP](#)), noting that only five countries have graduated since the UN established the LDC category in 1971.

LDCs are assessed using three criteria: health and education targets; economic vulnerability and gross national income per capita.

Countries must meet two of the three criteria at two consecutive triennial reviews of the CDP to be considered for graduation.

The Committee will send its recommendations to the UN Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)) for endorsement, which will then refer its decision to the [UN General Assembly](#).

For CDP member Diane Elson, a professor at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom, Thursday’s announcement was good news for millions of women in rural areas.

She pointed out that the latest session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women ([CSW](#)), currently under way in New York, is discussing the challenges facing this population.

“The success of the countries that are graduating reflects things like the improvement of the health and the education of the population, which extends to rural women, and the increase in incomes in the country, which extends to rural women,” she said. However, Ms. Elson stressed that the countries will need continued international support because they

remain vulnerable to external shocks, including the impact of climate change.

Mr. Ocampo said this vulnerability is particularly evident in Pacific Island states such as Kiribati.



José Antonio Ocampo (centre), Chair of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), along with Committee member Diane Elson (right), briefs journalists.

*On the left is Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.
UN Photo/Mark Garten*

Globally, there are [47 LDCs](#), according to the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The majority, 33, are in Africa, while 13 can be found in the Asia-Pacific region, and one is in Latin America.

In the 47 years of the LDC category’s existence, only five countries have graduated (Botswana, Cabo Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Maldives and Samoa)

The CDP said two more countries, Vanuatu and Angola, are scheduled for graduation over the next three years.

Nepal and Timor-Leste also met the criteria but were not recommended for graduation at this time, due to economic and political challenges.

That decision will be deferred to the next CDP triennial review in 2021, according to Mr. Ocampo.

Bangladesh, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar met the graduation criteria for the first time but would need to do so for a second time to be eligible for consideration.

Importance to travel & tourism

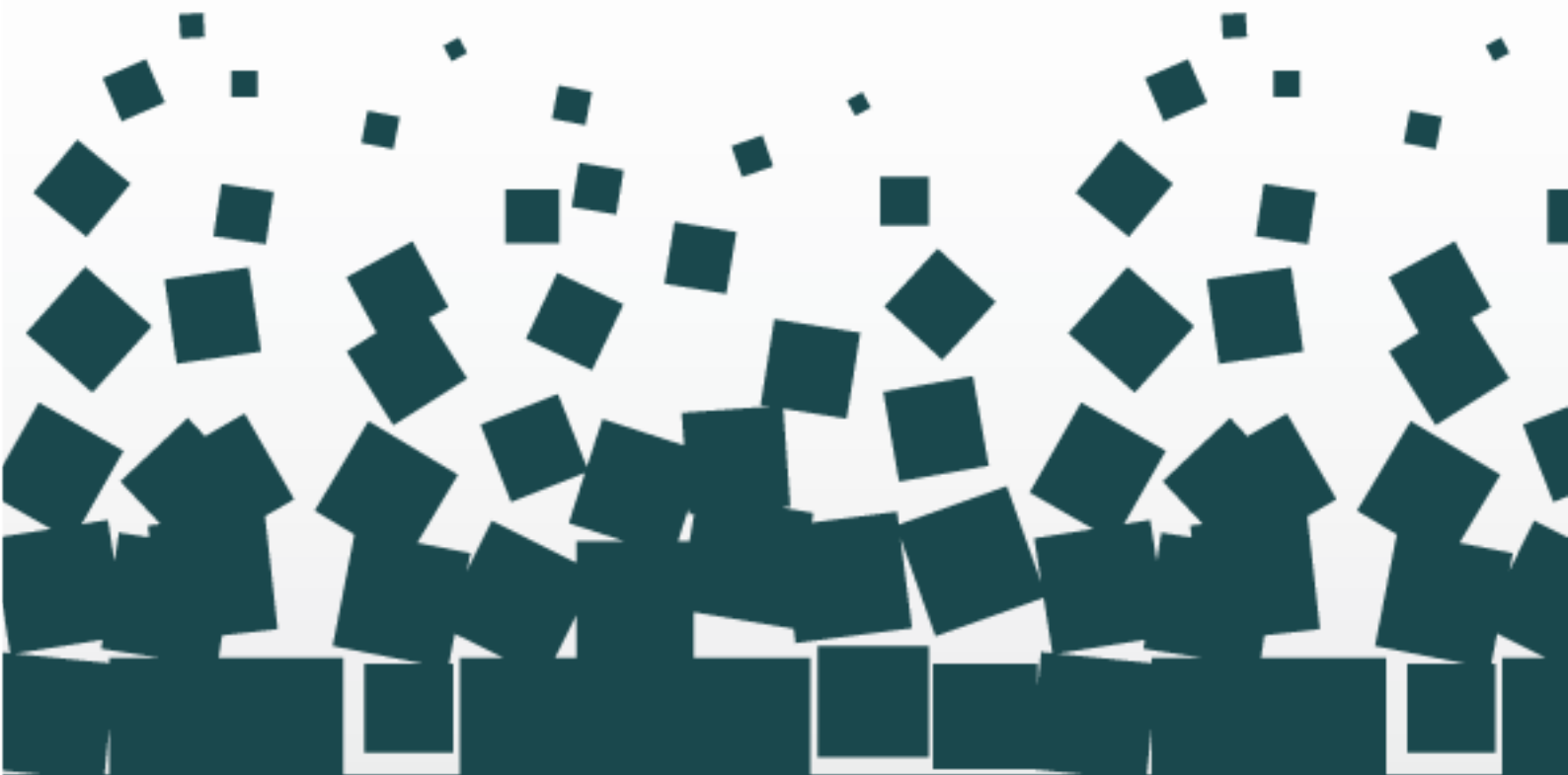
Nearly all these countries emerging from the poverty trap are prioritising tourism. In an era of instability involving commodity prices and manufacturing, travel & tourism offers a competitive advantage simply because every country is unique in its own right. That’s what makes travel & tourism different, and sustainable as a source of economic livelihood and jobs.

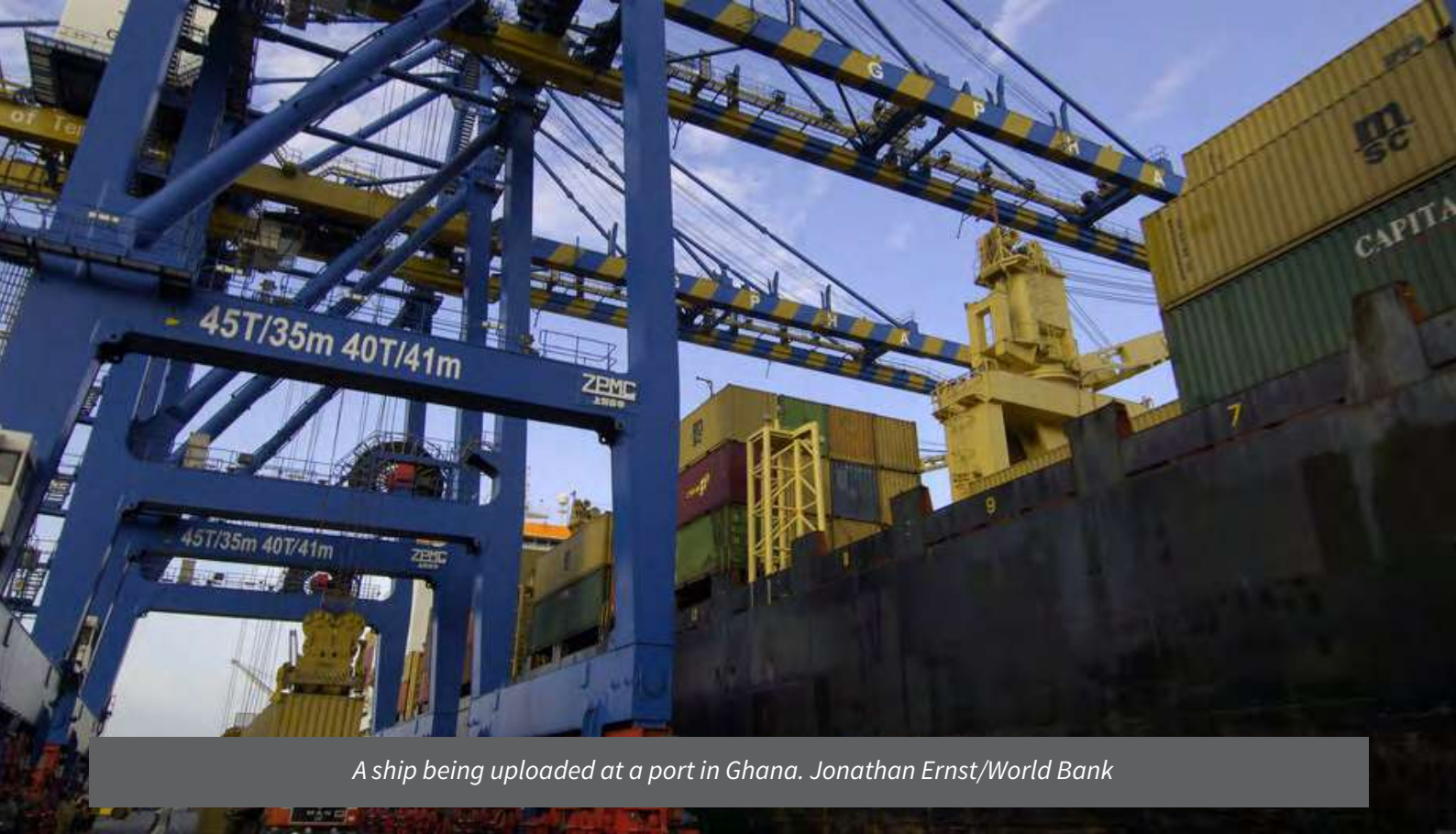
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DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH

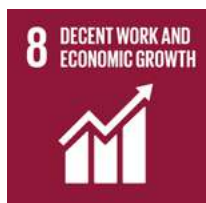


**With 50-country free trade
agreement, Africa prepares for
'leap into history'**





A ship being uploaded at a port in Ghana. Jonathan Ernst/World Bank



SDG 8: With 50-country free trade agreement, Africa prepares for 'leap into history'

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 22 March 2018 - United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has welcomed the signing of a continental free trade agreement in Africa that has created one of the world's largest trading blocs with over 50 countries.

"I congratulate African leaders for taking the leap into history by signing the African Continental Free Trade Area," said Mr. Guterres in a [statement](#) on Thursday.

"This is an important step towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and delivering on the African agenda of peace and prosperity."

In the statement, Secretary-General Guterres also underscored that the entire UN system stands ready to support the continent as it moves towards the entry into force of the Free Trade Area in the coming months.

He also applauded the leadership of President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, who led the process for the agreement.

[According](#) to the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Organization's development arm in the region, the agreement has the potential both to boost intra-African trade by 52.3 per cent by eliminating import duties, and to double this trade if non-tariff barriers are also reduced.

It is expected that the key beneficiaries from the Free Trade Area will be Africa's small and medium sized enterprises, which account for 80 per cent of the region's businesses; women, who represent 70 per cent of the informal cross-border traders; and the youth, who will be able to find new employment opportunities.

Importance to travel & tourism

Africa is clearly the next emerging continent. But Asia and Africa are also natural partners. Indeed, Africa has a lot to learn from the successes and failures of Asia. There is a lot the two giant continents can do together. More bilateral travel & tourism conferences between Asia and Africa are required.



SDG 11: As cities boom, forests key to meeting demands for water, food and energy





Forests play a critical role for many countries in their ability to mitigate climate change. FAO/Rudolf Hahn



SDG 11: As cities boom, forests key to meeting demands for water, food and energy

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 21 March 2018 - With two-thirds of the world's population expected to live in urban areas by 2050, forests are critical part of the solution to the unprecedented demand for water, food and energy that these cities will face, senior United Nations officials said Wednesday, on the International Day of Forests.

“How we manage forests [will determine how we meet this demand](#),” said Manoel Sobral Filho, Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFFS).

He noted that growth and shifts in population, changes in climate, and innovation in knowledge and technology will undoubtedly impact future forests. “One thing I am certain of, investing in forests is essential for securing a sustainable future for communities the world over,” he added.

In his video message for the Day, José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), said that “[well-managed forests](#)

[and trees](#) in and around cities provide habitats, food and protection for many plants and animals, helping to maintain and increase biodiversity.”

This year, the [International Day](#), observed annually on 21 March, will focus on the interlinkages between the sustainable management of forest and sustainable cities.

The theme provides an opportunity to highlight the benefits forests and trees provide to urban communities.

It is estimated that by 2050, more than half of the world's population will face water stress. Given that forested catchments provide three-quarters of all freshwater used worldwide, safeguarding the water-providing capacity of forests is even more urgent.

Trees in cities help regulate climate, store carbon, and reduce flooding and storm water runoff. Sustainable forest management and sustainable forest products offers some of the most effective and cost-competitive natural carbon capture and storage options available.

Forests are home to over 80 per cent of biodiversity on land, and urban forests and city parks can provide important habitat for migratory birds and other fauna and flora.

[Sustainable Development Goal 15](#) of the 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015 by world leaders, calls for action to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage

forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” by 2030.

[The UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030](#) envisions “a world in which all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for present and future generations.”

At UN Headquarters in New York, the Day is being celebrated with a [special event](#) featuring speeches by prominent officials, including Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Social and Economic Affairs.



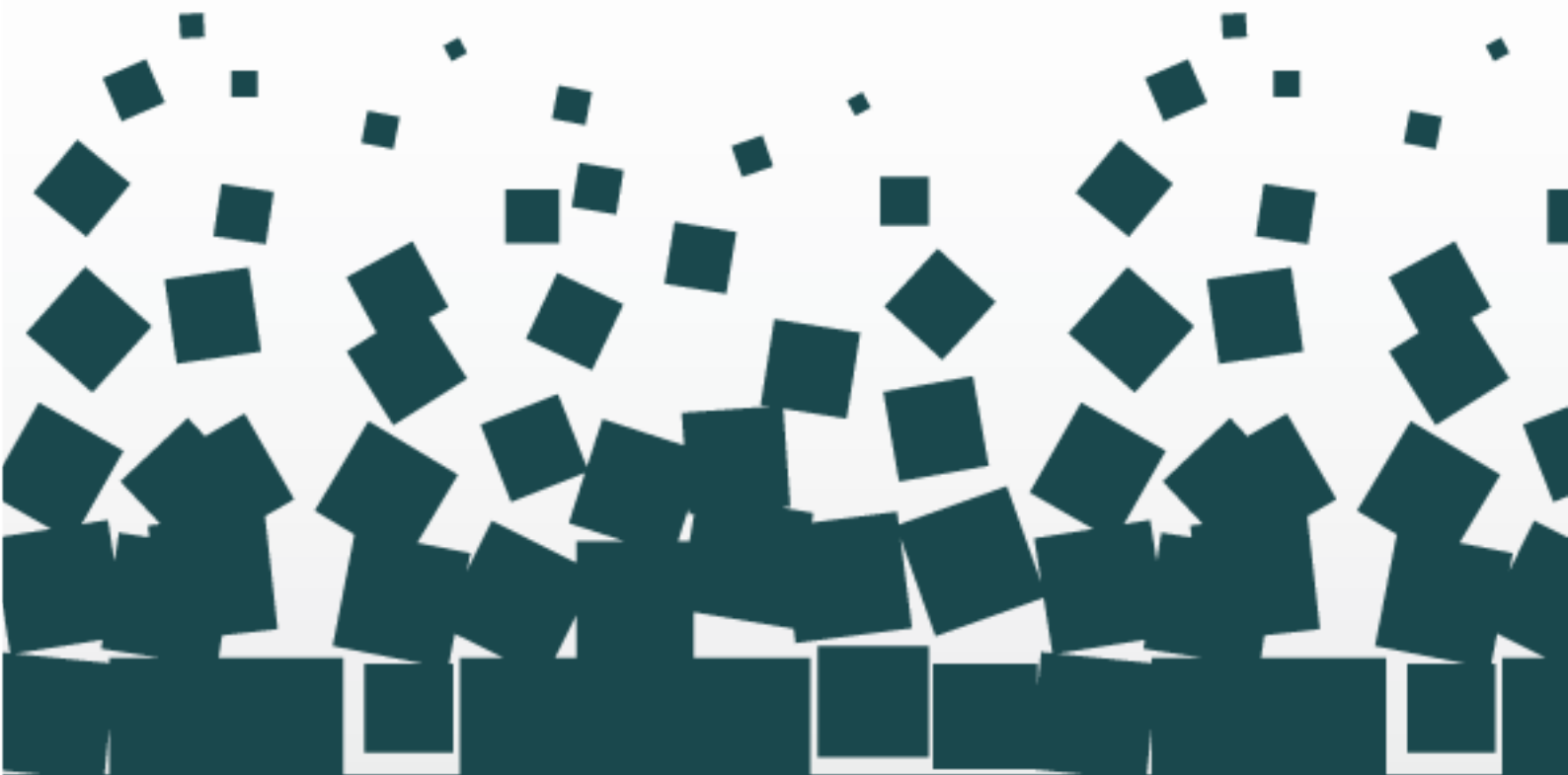
Large urban trees are excellent filters for urban pollutants and fine particulates. Source: FAO

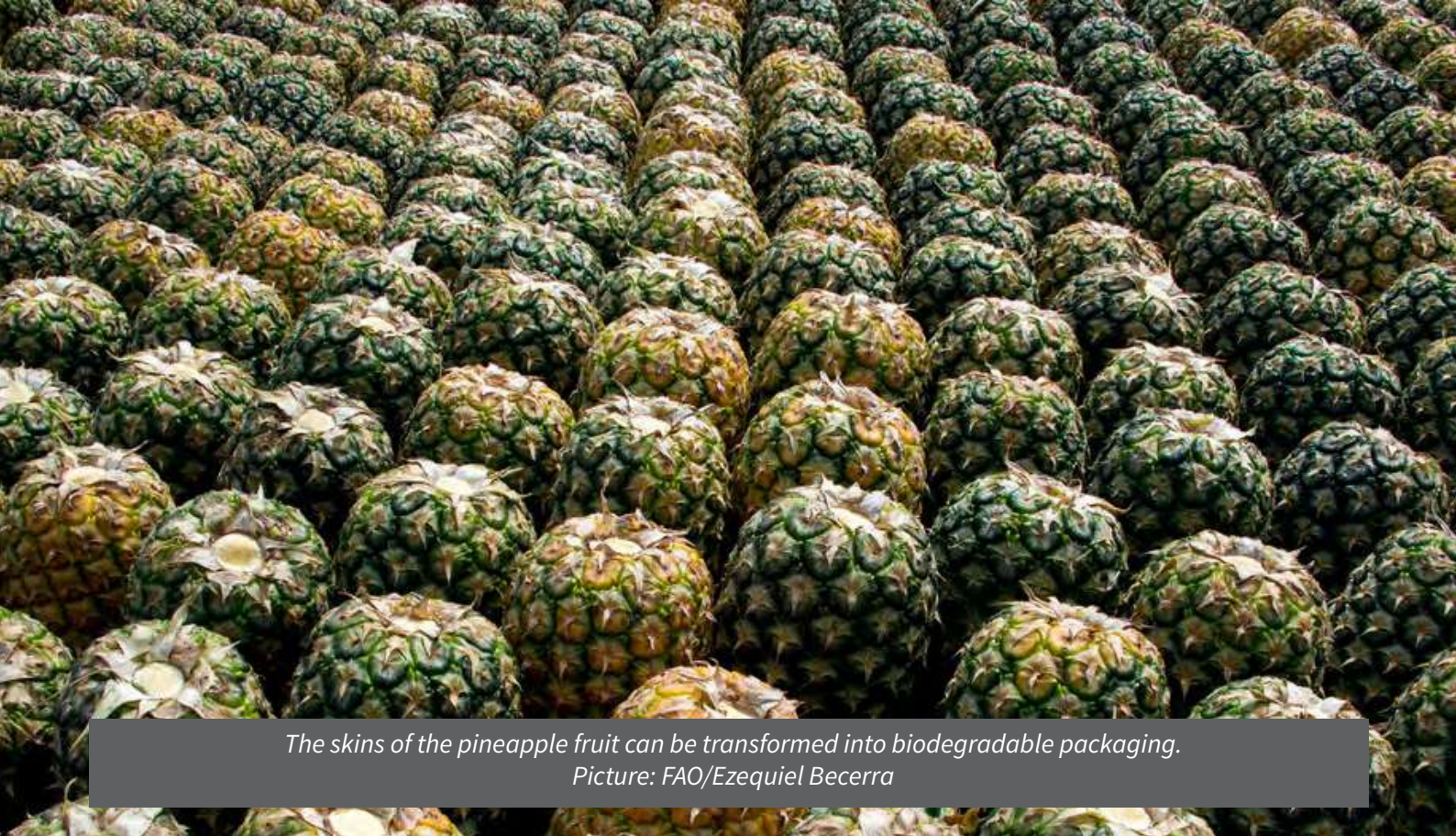
Importance to travel & tourism

Water and rainforests are interlinked. Both are sources of life. As global freshwater supply comes under pressure, so too is the global forest cover. A global tree planting campaign by the travel & tourism industry would be far more effective, useful and productive. Millions of trees could easily be planted annually in the vast amounts of space available across the travel & tourism real estate spectrum.



SDG 12: A bio-based, reuse economy can feed the world and save the planet





*The skins of the pineapple fruit can be transformed into biodegradable packaging.
Picture: FAO/Ezequiel Becerra*



SDG 12: A bio-based, reuse economy can feed the world and save the planet

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 20 April 2018 - Transforming pineapple skins into product packaging or using potato peels for fuel may sound far-fetched, but such innovations are gaining traction as it becomes clear that an economy based on cultivation and use of biomass can help tackle pollution and climate change, the United Nations agriculture agency said on Friday.

A sustainable bioeconomy, which uses biomass – organic materials, such as plants and animals and fish – as opposed to fossil resources to produce food and non-food goods “is foremost about nature and the people who take care of and produce biomass,” a senior UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) official said at the 2018 Global Bioeconomy Summit in Berlin, Germany.

This means family farmers, forest people and fishers, who are also “holders of important knowledge on how to manage natural resources in a sustainable way,” she explained.

Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General for Climate and Natural Resources, stressed how the agency not only works with member States and other partners across the conventional bioeconomy sectors – agriculture, forestry and fisheries – but also relevant technologies, such as biotechnology and information technology to serve agricultural sectors.

“We must foster internationally-coordinated efforts and ensure multi-stakeholder engagement at local, national and global levels,” she said, noting that this requires measurable targets, means to fulfil them and cost-effective ways to measure progress.

With innovation playing a key role in the bio sector, she said, all the knowledge – traditional and new – should be equally shared and supported.

Feeding the world, saving the planet

Although there is enough food being produced to feed the planet, often due to a lack of access, estimates show that some 815 million people are chronically undernourished.

“Bioeconomy can improve access to food, such as through additional income from the sale of bio-products,” said Ms. Semedo.

She also noted its potential contribution to addressing climate change, albeit with a warning against oversimplification.

“Just because a product is bio does not mean it is good for climate change, it depends on how it is produced, and in particular on much and what type of energy is used in the process,” she explained.

FAO has a longstanding and wide experience in supporting family farmers and other small-scale biomass producers and businesses.

Ms. Semedo, told the summit that with the support of Germany, FAO, together with an international working group, is currently developing sustainable bioeconomy guidelines.

Some 25 cases from around the world have already been identified to serve as successful bioeconomy examples to develop good practices.

A group of women fishers in Zanzibar are producing cosmetics from algae – opening up a whole new market with sought-after niche products; in Malaysia, a Government programme supports community-based bioeconomy; and in Colombia, a community is transforming pineapple skins into biodegradable packaging and honey into royal jelly – and these are just a few examples of a bioeconomy in action.

“Together, let’s harness the development for sustainable bioeconomy for all and leave no one behind,” concluded Ms. Semedo.

Importance to travel & tourism

The best thing that travel & tourism can do to support the bioeconomy is simply to buy more of these products. The biggest problem these bioeconomy companies have is marketing their products and making them commercially viable. May be a good to hold a dedicated trade event at which these companies can exhibit their wares specially for buyers and purchasing managers from travel & tourism.

13 CLIMATE
ACTION



SDG 13: Earth Hour: UN joins iconic landmarks 'going dark' globally





The UN joined landmarks around the world as it turned off the lights at its New York Headquarters and other locations, in observance of the 2018 edition of 'Earth Hour.' UN Photo/Evan Schneider



SDG 13: Earth Hour: UN joins iconic landmarks 'going dark' globally

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 24 March 2018
- The United Nations this evening turned off the lights at its iconic Headquarters in New York as well as at other facilities around the world in observance of “Earth Hour” – a global event highlighting the need for climate action and sustainable energy consumption.

In a video message, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) urged people around the world to join him in “turning out the lights and turning up the pressure” for a healthy planet.

“Climate change is moving much faster than we are. Its alarming impacts are upon us; resources and ecosystems across the world are under assault. Earth Hour is an opportunity to show our resolve to change,” he said.

“Protecting the environment is preserving life itself,” stressed the UN chief.

Organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Earth Hour encourages individuals, companies, organizations and Governments throughout the world to switch off their lights for one hour at 8:30 p.m. local time.

This year, Earth Hour is stressing the link between climate change and biodiversity loss, as thousands of plant and animal species are threatened with extinction as a result of increasing temperatures.

First launched in 2007 in Australia, Earth Hour has been commemorated every year since, mobilizing hundreds of millions of individuals to participate and growing to become one of the world’s largest grassroots movement for the environment and climate action.

Importance to travel & tourism

Too bad this is only marked once a year. Every day should be marked by an Earth Hour. What an enormous difference that would make. If beaches and islands are being shutdown to take a breather, the entire planet could do with a one-hour daily shutdown.

13 CLIMATE
ACTION



SDG 13: Climate chaos to continue in 2018, UN warns





A woman walks in the street of Roseau, capital of Dominica, which has struggled to overcome the severe impact of two category 5 hurricanes which tore through the region in September 2017. UNICEF/Moreno Gonzalez



SDG 13: Climate chaos to continue in 2018, UN warns

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 29 March 2018 - Climate change “is still moving much faster than we are,” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned on Thursday, calling for the political will, innovation and financing to cut global emissions by at least 25 per cent over the next two years.

“Scientists are now worried that unless accelerated action is taken by 2020, [the Paris goal may become unattainable](#),” the UN chief told reporters at the world body’s New York Headquarters.

The [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change, adopted by world leaders in December 2015, aims to keep global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius and pursues efforts to limit the temperature increase even further, to 1.5 degrees.

“I am beginning to wonder how many more alarm bells must go off before the world rises to the challenge,” Mr. Guterres said, noting that 2017 had been filled with climate chaos and 2018 has already brought more of the same.

“Climate change is still moving much faster than we are,” he warned, calling the phenomenon the greatest threat facing humankind.

Recent information from the World Meteorological Organization ([WMO](#)), the World Bank and the International Energy Agency shows the relentless pace of climate change.

For instance, the UN chief said, energy-related carbon dioxide emissions rose 1.4 per cent, to a historic high of 32.5 gigatonnes.



Secretary-General António Guterres briefs the press at Headquarters on climate change. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Moreover, weather-related disasters caused some \$320 billion in economic damage, making 2017 the costliest year ever for such losses.

In social as well as economic terms, the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season was devastating, washing away decades of development in an instant.

In South Asia, major monsoon floods affected 41 million people.

In Africa, severe drought drove nearly 900,000 people from their homes.

Wildfires caused destruction across the world. Arctic sea ice cover in winter is at its lowest level, and the oceans are warmer and more acidic than at any time in recorded history.

“This tsunami of data should create a storm of concern,” Mr. Guterres said, noting that next year he will convene a climate summit in New York aimed at boosting global ambition to meet the level of the climate challenge.

“The Stone Age did not end because the world ran out of stones. It ended because there were better alternatives. The same applies today to fossil fuels,” he said, stressing the need for a further cut in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 25 per cent by 2020.

Responding to a question about the [United States’ decision](#) to pull out of the Paris Agreement, Mr. Guterres said he received information from his Special Envoy on climate change and former New York City Mayor, [Michael Bloomberg](#), that there are expectations that the US – independently of the position of its Administration – might be able to meet the commitments made in Paris as a country due to the positive reactions of the American business community and local authorities.

“All around the world, the role of governments is less and less relevant. The role of the economy, the role of the society is more and more relevant,” he said.

Importance to travel & tourism

Travel & tourism takes short-term financial, geopolitical and health crises far more seriously than long-term climate change. Perhaps that’s only natural. Anything that impacts short-term stability has to be top priority. However, time flies and supposedly long-term challenges eventually also catch up.

13 CLIMATE
ACTION



**SDG 13: Heatwaves, hurricanes,
floods: 2017 costliest year ever
for extreme weather**





Surveying the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Dominica. Maria was one of several storms that devastated the Caribbean region during the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season. OCHA/Sheldon Casimir



SDG 13: Heatwaves, hurricanes, floods: 2017 costliest year ever for extreme weather

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 22 March 2018 - Hurricanes, monsoon floods and continuing severe drought made 2017 the costliest year ever for severe weather and climate events, according to a new report by the United Nations weather agency launched on the eve of World Meteorological Day.

“The start of 2018 has continued where 2017 left off – with extreme weather claiming lives and destroying livelihoods,” said Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said Thursday.

Now in its 25th year, the WMO Statement on the State of the Global Climate in 2017 drew attention to the high impact that extreme weather had on economic development, food security, health and migration, pointing to estimates showing disaster losses from weather and climate-related events at \$320 billion – the largest annual total on record.

The statement confirmed that last year was one of the three warmest on record, and the warmest not influenced by an El Niño event. It also examined other long-term indicators of climate change, such as increasing carbon dioxide concentrations, sea level rise, shrinking sea ice and ocean heat.

“The Arctic experienced unusually high temperatures, whilst densely populated areas in the northern hemisphere were gripped by bitter cold and damaging winter storms. Australia and Argentina suffered extreme heatwaves, whilst drought continued in Kenya and Somalia, and the South African city of Cape Town struggled with acute water shortages,” Mr. Taalas reflected on 2017.

According to the report, the North Atlantic hurricane season was not only the costliest ever for the United States, but it also eradicated decades of small Caribbean islands’ development gains.

“Since the inaugural Statement on the State of the Global Climate, in 1993, scientific understanding of our complex climate system has progressed rapidly,” Mr. Taalas stated.

“This includes our ability to document the occurrence of extreme weather and climate events, the degree to which they can be attributed to human influences, and the correlation of climate change with epidemics and vector-borne diseases,” he continued.

Compiled by WMO with input from national meteorological services and UN partners, the statement details that 2017 global mean temperatures were about 1.1 °C above pre-industrial temperatures.

The report also provided detailed information to support the international agenda on disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change.



State of the Global Climate in 2017, Source: WMO

“In the past quarter of a century, atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide have risen from 360 parts per million to more than 400 ppm.

They will remain above that level for generations to come, committing our planet to a warmer future, with more weather, climate and water extremes,” Mr. Taalas asserted.

The report revealed that the overall risk of heat-related illness or death has climbed steadily since 1980, with around 30 per cent of the world’s population now living in climatic conditions that deliver potentially deadly temperatures at least 20 days a year.

Additionally, from November 2016 to December 2017, 892,000 drought-related displacements were recorded.

“Now more than ever, we need to be weather-ready, climate-smart and water-wise,” concluded Mr. Taalas.

Importance to travel & tourism

Is the unbridled growth of travel & tourism worsening the climate change crisis? Far too much emphasis has been placed on constantly highlighting the positive economic contribution of tourism and too little on addressing its negative environmental, social and cultural impact. This gross imbalance is a major reason why industry perspectives are always skewed towards “building the business” rather than alleviating its impact. This has to be rectified – and quickly – in the years ahead.

13 CLIMATE
ACTION



SDG 13: Major reports assess state of global diversity, ecosystems





The African grey parrot, one of most trafficked birds in the world. Photo: CITES

13 CLIMATE ACTION



SDG 13: Major reports assess state of global diversity, ecosystems

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 15 March 2018 - With our planet's flora and fauna facing unprecedented threats, science and policy experts are set to gather next week in Medellin, Colombia, for a United Nations-backed meeting to consider five landmark reports aiming to inform better decisions by Governments, businesses and even individuals on biodiversity, and issues of land degradation and restoration.

“Literally, all Governments around the world should be looking at [the reports] to see what are we saying,” Sir Robert Watson, Chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ([IPBES](#)) told UN News ahead of the body's sixth plenary session which will run in Colombia's second largest city from 18-24 March.

“That will be the basis for informed decisions,” said the IPBES Chair.

Established in 2012, IPBES is the global science-policy platform tasked with providing the best-available evidence to inform better decisions affecting nature — by everyone from Governments and industry to non-governmental organization (NGOs) and the general public — towards strengthening services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.

The IPBES assessment reports are intended to provide decision makers with comprehensive, credible, evidence-based policy options to help reverse the unsustainable use of irreplaceable natural resources.

Prepared by more than 550 leading international experts and peer-reviewed by experts from both government and academia, the reports took three years to develop at a cost of more than \$6 million. IPBES will present the reports to representatives of its 128 member States for approval at the upcoming plenary.

The reports to be presented comprise four regional assessments of biodiversity in Africa; the Americas; Asia and the Pacific; and Europe and Central Asia; as well as an assessment of land degradation and restoration, both regionally and globally.

Each regional assessment will evaluate the status of biodiversity in its respective region and subregions, identifying progress, drivers of change and threats, as well as the policy-relevant issues affecting them.

In addition, the regional assessments will present lessons learned and progress (or lack thereof) on the [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#) and its [Biodiversity Targets](#), agreed by States parties to the [UN Convention on Biodiversity](#) at their meeting in Aichi, Japan.

The assessments will also describe the implications regarding biodiversity in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and fulfilling the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change.

The assessment on land degradation and restoration will identify threats to land-based ecosystems, offering evidence from around the world and a range of best-available solutions to reduce the environmental, social and economic risks and impacts of land degradation.

The findings of the five IPBES reports will also be key inputs to a new comprehensive IPBES global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services, due for release in 2019. IPBES has previously issued a large-scale thematic assessment on global and regional pollination.

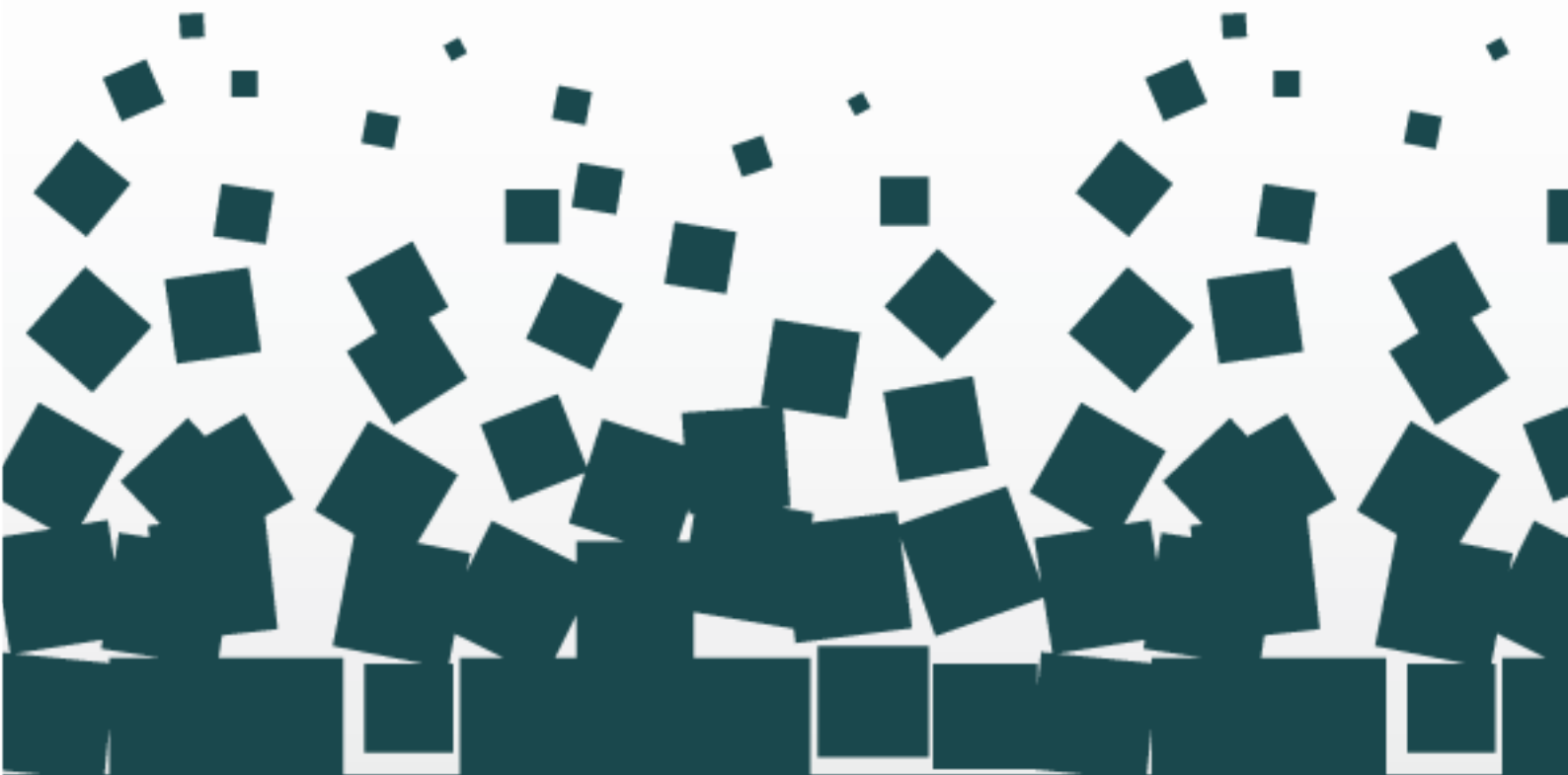
IPBES meets annually at a date and venue decided at the prior session. The Platform is placed under the auspices of four United Nations entities — the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) and the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) — and administered by UNEP.

Importance to travel & tourism

All these five global plans are ready-made checklists and blueprints which can and should be adopted by travel & tourism in order to put its shoulder to the wheel. Flora and fauna is intrinsic to the health of travel & tourism. However, the growth in tourism numbers is set to place enormous pressure on what travel & tourism promotes as pristine and unspoiled nature spots. The fact that beaches and islands are being closed to give their natural environment a chance to recover means that travel & tourism has become a part of the problem. It now needs to ensure that it becomes a part of the solution.



SDG 15: Scientists warn of 'alarming' loss of Borneo orangutans





A female Bornean orangutan with her offspring. HUTAN/KOPC Photo



SDG 15: Scientists warn of 'alarming' loss of Borneo orangutans

[Suzanna Dayne](#)

Jakarta, Indonesia, 11 Apr 2018, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) - - Once, there were hundreds of thousands of orangutans roaming the island of Borneo. Over the decades – as chainsaws and tractors have cleared millions of hectares of pristine rainforest – the number of these great apes has declined.

A new study shows just how alarming that decline is. In 16 years alone, researchers found that half the population of this critically endangered species has disappeared, leaving an estimated 70,000 on the island.

“We estimate that 148,500 orangutans disappeared from Borneo between 1999 to 2015,” says Maria Voigt, a scientist at the German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research and lead author of the study.

“One of the reasons orangutans are so vulnerable is because of the fact that they reproduce very slowly, giving birth only once every six to eight years and usually to just one baby. The loss of a relatively low number of orangutans can have a major impact on the species’ survival.”

Voigt is among 41 researchers who contributed to the study, which used field survey data collected on the ground and by helicopter to identify orangutan nests. A complex modeling approach combining knowledge about orangutan habitats and threats was then used to estimate the number of apes left.

The study also looked at the size of the orangutan populations.

“Orangutans have a better chance of survival if they live in populations larger than 100,” says Voigt. “Out of the 64 populations that experts identified in Borneo, only 38 were large enough to have a good chance of survival.”

[Read also Stories to save the orangutans](#)

Out of the 64 populations that experts identified in Borneo, only 38 were large enough to have a good chance of survival

HOME IS WHERE THE START IS

Loss of orangutans stems from loss of habitat, which is a direct result of increasing global demand for natural resources.

To understand more about habitat loss, the team relied on a new interactive map of Borneo developed by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) that calculates landscape changes by showing the impact of fires, industrial plantations and logging over the course of the past 40 years. Going one step further, the map identifies which companies are operating in a specific area and how fast the forest there is being converted.

The study found that during the 16-year period, half of the island’s orangutan population was affected by logging, deforestation or plantations.

“In a previous study we calculated that Borneo has lost 6.3 million hectares of old-growth forest – 15% of its forest cover – since 2000,” says CIFOR scientist David Gaveau, one of the paper’s co-authors.

Orangutan population density was lower in deforested areas – but, surprisingly, many orangutans disappeared from forested areas. Because there is no current support for alternative explanations, such as deaths caused by infections or diseases, Voigt says that this suggests the orangutans are being killed. When their natural habitat has been reduced, orangutans often become targets when they wander into villages searching for food.

“Conflict killing in these communities, as well as hunting, are major causes in the decrease in orangutan numbers,” says co-author Erik Meijaard, Director of the Borneo Futures research initiative and Chair of the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s oil palm task force.

“After speaking with these hunters, we found that most are generally hunting wild pig and deer for food. But if they have no luck hunting one day and then come across an orangutan, they may decide to kill it.” Killing reproductive female orangutans is also a major threat to the survival of the species, such as when mothers are killed and their babies sold into the illegal pet trade. And although the killing of an orangutan is illegal in Indonesia and Malaysia, the practice does still exist – especially in remote areas.

“Indonesian and Malaysian law should not just say that these apes are ‘not things’, but rather ‘legal persons’ that have a right to live,” says Gaveau. “The penalty for killing orangutans should be more severe, and enforced.”

Importance to travel & tourism

Orangutans are only the tip of the iceberg. Wildlife, flora and fauna is being decimated everywhere. If the travel & tourism industry makes these dwindling statistics the benchmark indicators of its success and/or failures, it may be able to make a more meaningful contribution to sustainability.



**SDG 16: UN chief honours
those who suffered shameful
Transatlantic slave trade,
urges respect for human dignity**





Details from the permanent memorial in acknowledgement of the tragedy and in consideration of the legacy of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz



SDG 16: UN chief honours those who suffered shameful Transatlantic slave trade, urges respect for human dignity

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 25 March 2018 - Honouring those who suffered the brutalities of the Transatlantic slave trade, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said the International Day set aside to remember this “epically shameful” chapter of human history is an opportunity raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

“More than 15 million men, women and children from Africa were enslaved,” Mr. Guterres pointed out in a video message for the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, explaining its raison d’être “[to acknowledge a brutal chapter](#) in human history, and to raise awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice today.”

Every year on 25 March, the Day of Remembrance offers the opportunity to honour and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system, borne of the largest forced and legally sanctioned movement of people in human history.

“As we mark the 70th anniversary of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) this year, let us honour those who perished or suffered under slavery,” the UN chief continued.

To permanently honour the victims, the United Nations in 2015 erected a [memorial](#), The Ark of Return by Haitian-American architect Rodney Leon, at its Headquarters in New York.



The Ark of Return, the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, located at the Visitors' Plaza of UN Headquarters in New York. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Also, from 5 to 28 March, UN Headquarters will host a temporary exhibition entitled [Remember Slavery: Say it Loud](#). It features the work of 11 male and 11 female architects of African descent, whose perseverance, creativity and unique perspective have given them a voice on how public spaces are presented and utilized.

[African Descent](#), which runs from through 2024.

“Let us celebrate the gains of people of African descent,” Mr. Guterres concluded, “and let us press, every day and everywhere, to defend the dignity of every human being.”

Again this year, the Day is being commemorated during the [International Decade for People of](#)



Secretary-General António Guterres addresses the commemorative meeting to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Remember Slavery: UN chief calls for continued struggle to ensure dignity and justice for all

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 26 March 2018 - Commemorating the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the United Nations Secretary-General on Monday said that while the abhorrent practice was abolished in the 1800s, it continues to have profound social, cultural and political impacts today.

“This observance was established not only to acknowledge a dreadful chapter in human history, but also to shine a spotlight on the dangers of racism and prejudice today,” said António Guterres, adding:

“This tragic mass human suffering must be recounted to younger generations through education that offers an accurate reflection of historical accounts, including the many acts of bravery and resistance carried out by slaves.”

The UN chief said it is also equally important to highlight the contributions made by people of African descent across the world.

Yet despite the achievements and the recognition of African descendants, gaps exist which prevent them from the full realization of their rights and many encounter racism and hatred on a daily basis.

“We must recognize the work that is still to be done,” stressed Mr. Guterres, calling on everyone to commit themselves to lift all lives and fight against forced labour and other horrendous abuses of human rights.

Speaking alongside Mr. Guterres, Graciela J. Dixon, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama, highlighted that the current generation of people of African descent are the living testimony of the struggles and triumphs of their ancestors.

“We honour the memory of victims and survivors of the transatlantic slave trade by continuing our common struggle to ensure that all people live in dignity and justice,” he urged.



Graciela Dixon, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama, addresses the commemorative meeting of the General Assembly to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

UN Photo/Loey Felipe

“It is because of such men and women that we can gather here today to mark our determination to never ever again in human history, repeat the horrendous crime of slavery, neither for our people nor for any other human being on earth,” Ms. Dixon said, in her keynote address at the commemoration.

She underscored that everyone’s right to enjoy and live in a free world where the full and final eradication of racism and discrimination in every country is no longer a wishful thought.

And, looking back and drawing strength from the past generations – who persevered despite overwhelming discrimination and segregation – will help bring it to reality.

“If they resisted and endured [...] we truly have no excuse,” she said.

Importance to travel & tourism

A history of the Slave Trade will be an important component of the African experience as the continent opens up and expands its contacts with Asia. Both continents truly have a lot to learn from each other, especially in terms of learning from the lessons of history.



SDG 16: Call to promote tolerance, respect diversity, marks Int'l Day against racial discrimination





Secretary-General António Guterres addresses the commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. UN Photo/Loey Felipe



SDG 16: Call to promote tolerance, respect diversity, marks Int'l Day against racial discrimination

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 20 March 2018 - People worldwide are being encouraged by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to think about how they can better promote tolerance, inclusion and respect for diversity.

The UN chief made the appeal in [a speech](#) to the General Assembly in New York on Tuesday, ahead of the International Day for [the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#).

“It is time all nations and all people live up to the words of [the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), which recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human race,” he stated.

Mr. Guterres said while there has been progress since the Declaration’s adoption 70 years ago – for example, in the advancement of the rights of women, children, indigenous people and persons with disabilities – there is still far to go in ending discriminatory attitudes, actions and practices.

He listed pressing issues such as gender inequality; the “alarming rise” in xenophobia, racism and intolerance, and a resurgence in far-right political parties and neo-Nazi viewpoints.

Refugees and migrants are also being denied their rights, in addition to being falsely vilified as threats to the societies they seek to join, he continued.

“So, on this International Day, let us all consider how we can better promote tolerance, inclusion and respect for diversity in all nations and among all communities,” the UN chief said.

“Let us work to eliminate messages of hatred – the concept of ‘us’ and ‘them’; the false attitude that we can accept some and reject and exclude others simply for how they look, where they worship or who they love.”

Like the Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also looked to the landmark Declaration in his address to the gathering.

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein highlighted how discrimination against individuals affects society as a whole.

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights warns very clearly that if rights are not protected, conflict may follow,” he said.

“Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that discrimination, intolerance, prejudice and scapegoating not only lead to disastrous splintering within societies, endangering national cohesion; they also frequently generate threats to regional peace and lead to a conflict.”

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21 March. It commemorates the lives of 69 people killed during a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, on that day in 1960.

They were among thousands protesting laws that required black citizens to carry a type of internal

passport known as a passbook which restricted their movements: a manifestation of the then apartheid system which upheld racial segregation. As the UN chief pointed out, apartheid “was ultimately – and thankfully – consigned to history” after Nelson Mandela was released from prison and later ascended to the presidency.

Mr. Mandela, who died in 2013, was the first democratically-elected president of South Africa and the country’s first black head of state.

While the UN observance provides an opportunity to reaffirm rejection of racism, xenophobia and intolerance, Mr Guterres was saddened that these attitudes persist in countries and among communities around the world.

“A stark and tragic example lies in the egregious treatment of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar,” he said, referring to the ethnic minority community whose members have been fleeing to Bangladesh by the thousands to escape persecution.

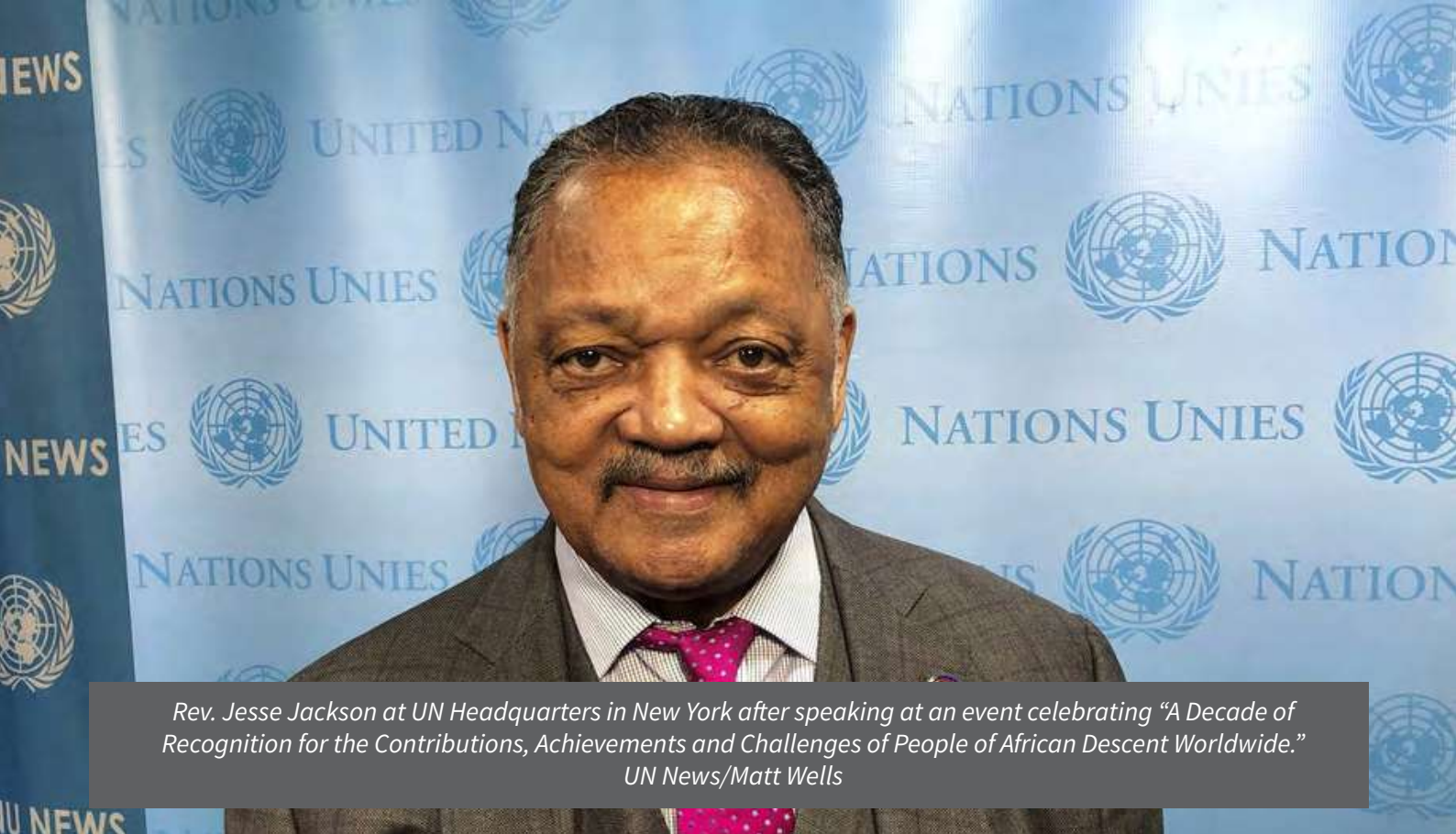
Importance to travel & tourism

“It is time all nations and all people live up to the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human race.” A great quote by the UN Secretary General, touching upon yet another generally taboo topic in travel & tourism: human rights. The underlying message is also clear: Human rights violations today lead to conflict tomorrow, and conflict is not good for travel & tourism. Some prevention rather than cure in this area would be a good idea.



SDG 16: UN hears call for 'global coalition of conscience' to cement human rights





Rev. Jesse Jackson at UN Headquarters in New York after speaking at an event celebrating “A Decade of Recognition for the Contributions, Achievements and Challenges of People of African Descent Worldwide.”
UN News/Matt Wells



SDG 16: UN hears call for ‘global coalition of conscience’ to cement human rights

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 26 March 2018 - There needs to be a “massive global coalition of conscience” to enshrine the values of racial equality and human rights for all, declared civil rights icon Rev. Jesse Jackson, speaking at the United Nations.

The veteran leader of the struggle for racial justice was at UN Headquarters last week to speak at an event marking the Decade of Recognition for the Contributions, Achievements and Challenges of People of African Descent Worldwide.

He took part in a panel discussion for the event; part of a programme celebrating the [International Decade for People of African Descent](#), running from 2014-2024, as well as the [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#), held each 21 March.

Mr. Jackson told the forum that racism was “a sin before God” and a ruthless tool of oppression, exploitation and profit. “Racial idolatry is a mental health issue” he added, which “manifests itself in so many ways, even in our politics.”

The head of the Chicago-based Rainbow PUSH Coalition, which fights for social change, Mr. Jackson ran for President as a Democratic Party candidate in 1984 and in 1988, and pointed out that next month also sees the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Mr Jackson was with the civil rights icon as one of his aides, when he was shot and killed on a hotel balcony in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968.

Addressing the same event, UN Human Rights Commissioner, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, [said](#) that people of African descent continued to face racism and racial discrimination across the world.

"This racism is fuelled by messages of fear and violence that are propagated for political gain," he said, and "it impoverishes, humiliates, oppresses and excludes millions of women, men and children."

In an interview with UN News following [the event](#), Mr. Jackson said that the student-led protests to ban rapid-fire assault weapons, following the gun rampage at a Florida high school last month, was a "watershed moment" that should be accompanied by a similar tipping point against poverty and violence overall.

He said that "too few" have too much, while "too many have too little", and that although there was racial equality for African-Americans in principle across the US, "we don't have economic equality and race was used to oppress us and deny us access to resources."

UN News: Are these events focused around this UN International Decade for People of African Descent getting the attention they deserve? A decade's a long time to try and keep the focus on this very important issue of rights.

Jesse Jackson: Well, even longer, because racism is used as a tool of oppression, a tool of division. It was a pseudoscience: whites were taught to be superior, blacks were taught to be inferior. Unfortunately, many of us learn our lessons too well. Whites are not superior; blacks are not inferior. We're all people, measured by our environment, our attainment, our work, our effort.

And so, it took a long time to get to the point that racially, we have racial equality. We don't have economic equality and race was used to oppress us and deny us access to resources. So, we're racially equal, but our education is not equal; access to healthcare is not equal; access to development is not equal. And so, that's the next phase of our struggle beyond racial freedom - racial equality.

UN News: What's your overall assessment of the state of racial justice across the world today?

Jesse Jackson: We've seen some tremendous breakthroughs in our own country in the last 50 years, since this is the anniversary of Dr. [Martin Luther] King's assassination. We've been bequeathed the right to vote, and we've gone from the balcony in Memphis where he was killed to the balcony at the White House where [Barack Obama] overlooked the Potomac River as President.

So, the right to vote has had some noticeable effect. In cities, mayors of cities, and the Congress and legislators, that progress has been made. On the other hand, there has been a terrible reaction to our progress the last few years led by the fearful [Donald] Trump forces; anti-racial justice, anti-gender equality forces. There's been a kind of setback, but we're fighting back.

UN News: Is it naïve to think that we can ever eliminate racial discrimination? Is that really an impossible dream, in a way?

Jesse Jackson: You certainly can reduce it by having effective laws to enforce. For example, there's virtually no racial discrimination now in access to public accommodations because it's illegal and it's costly. The day Dr. King gave the speech in Washington in 1963, from Texas to Florida to Maryland, we couldn't use a single public toilet. We couldn't rent a room. Black and brown soldiers could not sit by a Nazi prisoner of war in American military bases.

We changed that law and that changed behaviour. So, that's virtually eliminated. Politically, we got the right to vote, but the forces that grant the right to vote never stop trying to nullify the vote that was granted

in 1965. That remains the unfinished business of the struggle. As is economic justice. So, we've achieved a measure of scientific racial equality, but not resource equality.

On the football field, we're dominant in the National Football League. There are 32 teams, all white owners. In major league baseball, not one black owner. And that means that if you go from picking cotton balls, to picking footballs and basketballs and to not ownership, you've not made progress that you deserve to make.

We should be able to control our resources, and right now, we can't get the capital to do so. A black person with collateral cannot get the same money from a bank that a white person can get with an idea. The gap in access to resources is a huge gap.



*Rev. Jesse Jackson speaks at the United Nations. January 2009.
UN Photo/Mark Garten*

UN News: *It seems that when there is a level playing field, it's a great struggle just to keep it level and this is true even in very developed countries like the US.*

Jesse Jackson: Well, we did not get good at baseball until everybody could play. On the playing field, it's relatively basically equal, but beyond the field, it is not – so, picking cotton was not that bad, except that we could pick cotton but we couldn't own the land. We couldn't take it to the gin. We couldn't turn it into textiles. We couldn't sell it on the international market. We could only stay at the bottom level. Same as with athletics.

UN News: *Now, it's the seventieth anniversary of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), which recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all human beings. Why is it that this Declaration isn't very much a front-and-centre document for humanity? I mean, the Secretary-General said yesterday that the words of that document are not matched by the facts on the ground.*

Jesse Jackson: Well, they're not because those who have privileges and advantages don't want to give them up. I remember I went to South Africa in 1979 for the first time and I met with this bevy of press at the airport. And I trying to answer the questions in a way that would not get me kicked out of the country, so I was...

UN News: *Apartheid was still raging, of course.*

Jesse Jackson: Yeah, and so [I was asked] well what about our system, so I said: "Human rights for all human beings, measuring rights by one yardstick." "That's it! That's it!" It was offensive: the idea of human rights for all human beings, measuring rights by one yardstick was offensive and it remains offensive in many parts of the world today.

Human rights for all human beings, measured by one yardstick. That's why I say effort, and hard work, matter. Inheritance and access matter more. In America, they have something called basketball. And in this season, in March, the colleges play 'March Madness' moving toward a big [final] game. And last week, there was an upset where the number 16 team beat the number one team, not by projection but on the court. The court was the same length and width, the number 16 team won the game. That can only take place when you don't get advantages based upon – or privileges based upon – race.



Jesse Jackson (left) speaks with the Joseph N. Garba, the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations and the Chair of the Special Committee Against Apartheid. Rev. Jackson was visiting the UN to address the Special Committee.
UN Photo/Milton Grant

UN News: *Final question, if there is a failure of politicians to lead on racial justice presently, where will the leadership for change come from now? Is it time for a new, revamped, international, global civil rights' movement?*

Jesse Jackson: Well, it comes from church, it comes from [...] A moral tone must be set. It comes from political leaders, it comes from a wide range of areas. It may come from students. We've been [plagued] for a long time by excessive violence in this country, and yet [after last month's deadly shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida] now the whole world is moving toward "ban assault weapons." You never quite know when that magic mark is going to hit and take off.

UN News: *Do you believe this is a watershed moment on that issue?*

Jesse Jackson: I am convinced it is because Americans own 300 million guns [...] eight million assault weapons. They've shot up schools and churches. They can shoot down airplanes. It's too dangerous to have such weapons in a society such as ours. And so, there is a watershed moment I believe on that question. Should have been a long time ago, but it just may be now.

We are the most violent nation on Earth. We make the most guns and we shoot them; mostly each other. We make the most bombs and we drop them. We must choose coexistence over co-annihilation, and future over funerals.

But there must also be a watershed moment on poverty and violence. There's too much poverty in America. Too few people have got too much; too many have too little.

UN News: *But can a coalition really be that broad in order to get, you know, to have results?*

Jesse Jackson: It has to be broad but it all starts in local areas. A given area will inspire you at the local level to join a more massive coalition. It must be a massive global coalition of conscience.

We must value life everywhere. We've globalized capital, we've globalized technology [...] We must now globalize human rights: workers' rights; women's rights; children's rights; and environmental security.

We must globalize all the values that make life 'life,' for everybody.

Importance to travel & tourism

This is not the kind of interview that would appear in any travel & tourism media. Yet, all the subjects and issues covered go right to the heart of everything that travel & tourism supposedly holds dear. Ever heard any of our travel & tourism thought leaders call for a “massive global coalition of conscience?” No? Is this call worth raising as a battle cry?



SDG 16: Harness the power of poetry for peace, says UNESCO chief





Children reading a panegyric during a festival in Timbuktu, Mali.
UN Photo/Marco Dormino



SDG 16: Harness the power of poetry for peace, says UNESCO chief

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 21 March 2018 - Not merely limited to beautiful and poignant words and phrases, poetry holds the extraordinary power to open new horizons, bridge differences and illuminate a path to peace and dialogue, the head of the United Nations cultural agency said on [World Poetry Day](#).

In a [message](#) paying tribute to all who bring the art to life, Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO), recalled the words of poet Langston Hughes which illustrate a person's desire for freedom despite all adversities:

*"Dreams
Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow "*
– Langston Hughes

Poet Hughes, who was also a writer, playwright and leader of the Harlem Renaissance – an artistic, social and intellectual movement that took place in the Harlem district in New York, in the 1920s – placed his art at the service of the fight against the discrimination suffered by the African American community.

"His poetry is inseparable from his commitment to civil rights and it remains a source of inspiration for all the advocates of fundamental freedoms around the world," added Ms. Azoulay.

Commemorated every year every year on 21 March, World Poetry Day recognizes the prominent art as one of humanity's most treasured forms of cultural and linguistic expression as well as identity.

It also draws attention to the challenges confronting its traditions and forms, many of which are in danger of disappearing, as is the case for many lesser-used and minority languages.

To maintain living traditions, UNESCO has included a number of poetic forms in the intangible heritage of humanity.

These include the poetic art of Ca trù singing from Viet Nam, Al'azi from the United Arab Emirates, Baul songs from Bangladesh and the oral heritage of Gelede shared by the Yoruba-Nago community living in Togo, Benin and Nigeria.

Poetry also a tool to promote education

Not just limited to art and culture, poetry is also a conduit for formal and informal education, highlighted the UNESCO chief in her message, noting that it provides effective support for lifelong learning.

“This is why [we] encourage and support artistic education since it strengthens intellectual, emotional and psychological development, shaping generations that are more well-rounded and capable of reinventing the world,” she added.

Finally, since poetry is an act of creating and sharing, UNESCO invites everyone, on this World Day, to create, invent, share, and be open to other languages and other ways of naming the world, to rejoice in all that is different in our diversity. Since to cultivate art and cultivate the mind is also to cultivate peace.

Importance to travel & tourism

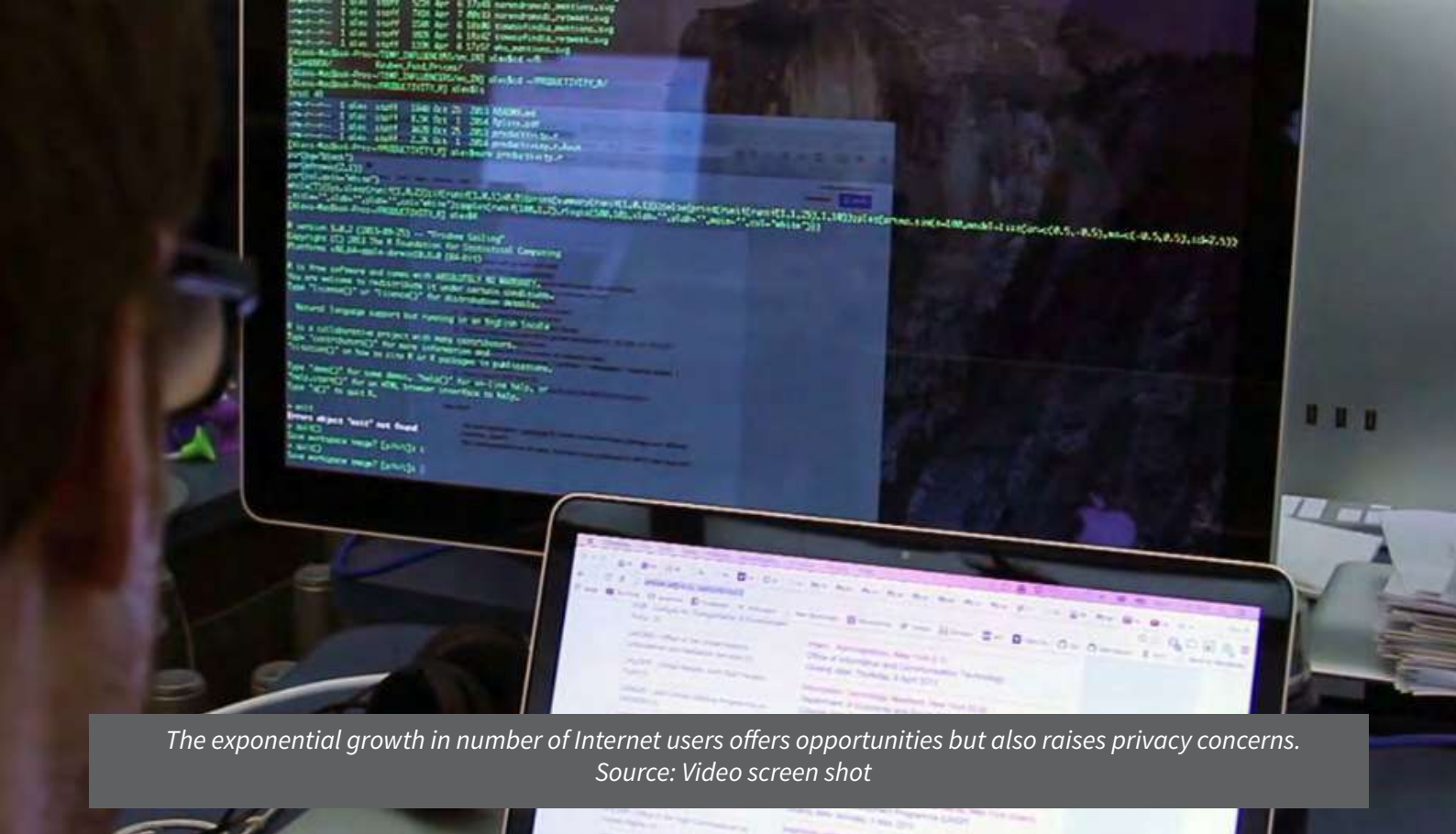
Has the travel & tourism industry ever organised a poetry festival anywhere? For sure, national tourism organisations have supported many a festival of literature, arts, culture and heritage. Perhaps it is time to organise, rather than just support, a dedicated poetry festival focussing just on the theme of travel & tourism. That would certainly be a crowd-puller.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



SDG 16: Facebook privacy debate shows most countries not ready for digital economy – UN





*The exponential growth in number of Internet users offers opportunities but also raises privacy concerns.
Source: Video screen shot*



SDG 16: Facebook privacy debate shows most countries not ready for digital economy – UN

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 28 March 2018 - Internet user growth is booming and with more people than ever purchasing goods and services online, protecting their privacy must be a top priority, the United Nations has said.

The main UN agency dealing with the economics of globalization said Wednesday that the privacy concerns raised after the revelation that a political data firm gained access to millions of Facebook users without their consent “vividly illustrates that most countries are ill prepared for the digital economy.”

This is all the more worrying given that about 90 per cent of new Internet users over the last five years live in developing countries – about half of which currently lack legislation to protect their privacy.

In addition, with global e-commerce estimated to have reached \$26 trillion in 2016, ensuring that no one is left behind in enjoying its benefits is vital.

“We know that the digital economy can bring great benefits to developing countries, but [we need to address some critical questions to ensure that digitalization leads to the future we want](#),” said Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Mr. Kituyi’s call coincides with the agency’s [E-Commerce Week](#) – the leading forum for Governments, private sector, development banks, academia and the civil society to discuss development opportunities and challenges before the evolving digital economy.

Being held from 16-20 April, in Geneva, under the theme Development Dimensions of Digital Platforms, the E-Commerce Week will look into the role of evolving technologies to strengthen sustainable development.

Some of its highlights include a high-level dialogue on these platforms as well as Ministerial roundtable discussions.

The Week will also feature events on digital identities and protection of consumers online, conducting trade and e-commerce in the digital era; blockchain technologies; and role of regional banks.

Importance to travel & tourism

Note this quote by the UNCTAD Secretary General: “We know that the digital economy can bring great benefits to developing countries, but we need to address some critical questions to ensure that digitalization leads to the future we want.” This is equally applicable to travel & tourism which, like the other economic sectors, has been negligent in addressing critical questions that were well known to be looming but remained off the table. It was a head-in-the-sand attitude that has eventually caught up with everyone, travel & tourism included.



SDG 16: UN Disarmament Commission debates ways to prevent arms race in outer space





International Space Station (2008), NASA.



SDG 16: UN Disarmament Commission debates ways to prevent arms race in outer space

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 2 April 2018 - Despite the deteriorating security situation, there are some signs of progress in the field of disarmament, such as the intention of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the United States to hold summit talks, a senior United Nations official said Monday.

“At a time when global anxieties about nuclear weapons are higher than at any time since the Cold War, measures for disarmament and arms control are more vital than ever,” Thomas Markram, Deputy High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, told the opening of the 2018 session of the [UN Disarmament Commission](#), held in New York.

“Since September, there have been no fundamental changes in the interrelated trends that are eroding efficacy in arms control and negatively affecting international peace and security,” added Mr. Markram, as he delivered a speech on behalf of High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu.

He stressed, however, that there have been some recent signs of progress that point to where the Commission can make a unique and constructive contribution.

As for the reported commitment by the DPRK to denuclearization following the recent talks held in China, Mr. Markram said that “we hope these positive developments will be the start of a longer process of sincere dialogue leading to sustainable peace and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.”

Positive developments also include the successful reduction of strategic nuclear forces by Russia and the US to the levels required by their New START Treaty.

Looking to build on this momentum, the Commission has also included prevention of an arms race in outer space in its agenda for this session.

“One specific collateral measure for disarmament on which this body should certainly be able to make a contribution is the goal of preserving outer space as a realm free of conflict,” Mr. Markram said, noting that several recent trends are impacting the security and sustainability of outer space activities.

These include: the massive growth in the number and diversity of actors operating in outer space, including governments and the private sector; the proliferation of hazardous space debris; and increasing dependence on outer space in the civilian, government and military sectors.

“As long as some continue to see outer space as a potential realm for war-fighting, we will face increasing risk of weaponization and conflict,” he said.

However, there continues to be common ground among the major space-faring nations and other space actors on ways to make progress in a number of areas, including the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures to mitigate misunderstandings and reduce risk, he noted.

The Commission was created in 1978 as a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly, composed of all Member States, to consider various issues in the field of disarmament and make recommendations. Read more about [today's debate](#) here.

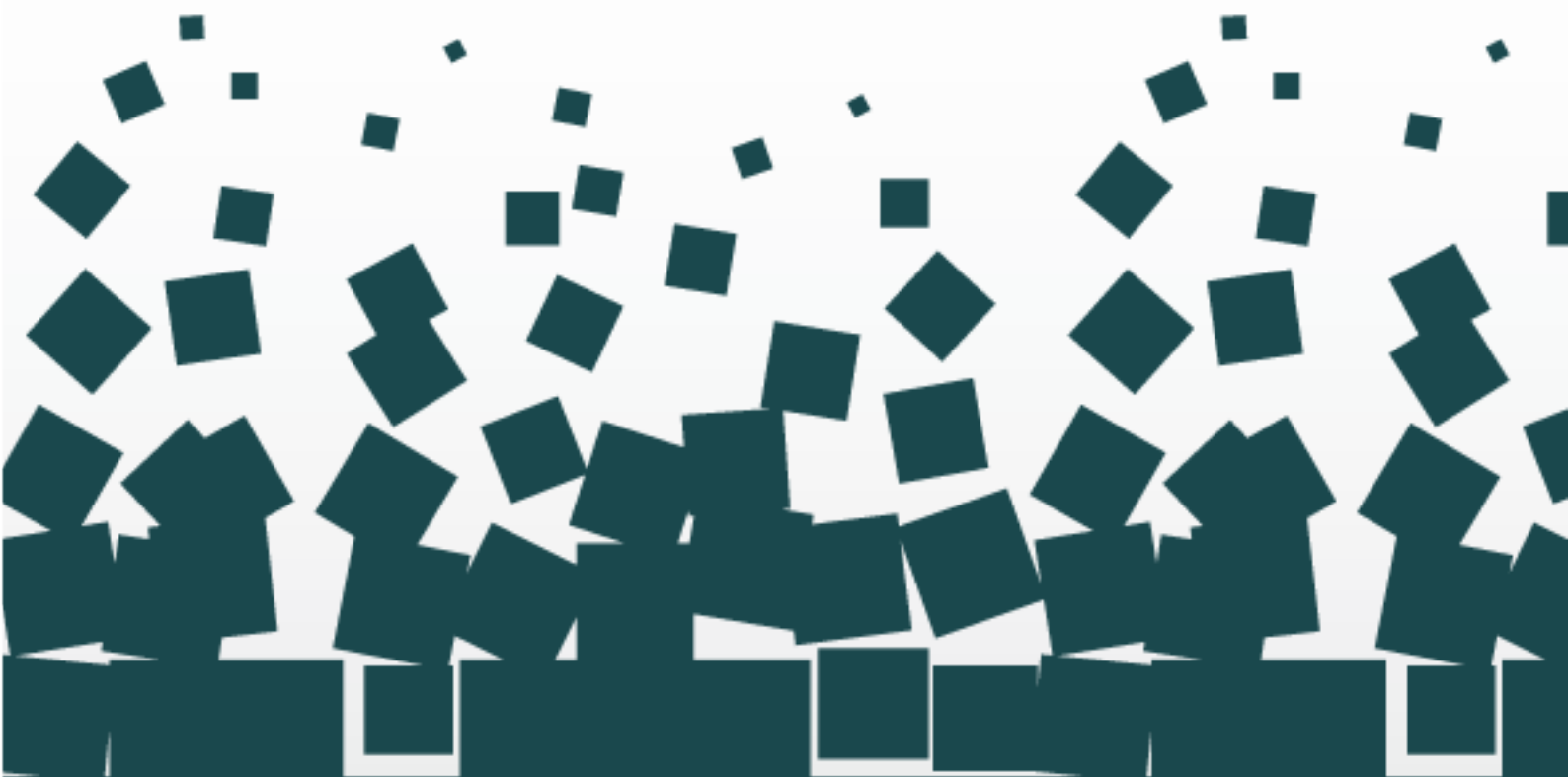
Importance to travel & tourism

The global arms race, in space or on Mother Earth, consumes billions of dollars worth of financial resources and causes more environmental damage than any other sector. Yet, it remains entirely free of any accountability. If travel & tourism were to cross check its national budgets against the military budgets, it would clearly see that the industry of peace gets far lower allocations. If war and conflict are travel & tourism's biggest nemesis, some soul-searching about this disparity is long overdue.

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



SDG 17: UN forum examines role partnerships play in tackling global migration challenge





Children on a train at a reception centre for refugees and migrants in Gevgelija in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. UNICEF/Ashley Gilbertson

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



SDG 17: UN forum examines role partnerships play in tackling global migration challenge

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 26 March 2018 - Partnerships at local, national, regional and international levels are crucial to ensuring global migration is better managed, the United Nations migration agency chief said Monday in New York.

“Partnerships must include all stakeholders: Government, international organizations and civil society,” William Lacy Swing, Director General of International Organization for Migration (IOM), told the [International Dialogue on Migration](#), a two-day forum that is part the year-long UN-led effort to craft a [Global Compact](#) to cover all dimensions of international migration.

“Partnerships are not just about working together but about working together to find new and creative ways of conducting our migration business,” he added.

Partnership and cooperation are cornerstones of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and essential for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

[Goal 17](#) calls for the revitalization and enhancement of the global partnership for sustainable development in all areas, including migration.

Moreover, the Secretary-General’s recent migration report states that “Managing migration is one of the most urgent and profound tests of international cooperation in our time.”

The central importance of partnerships on migration was a key takeaway from the stock-taking meeting in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, in December 2017 and one of the key messages of last year’s International

Dialogue on Migration.

Calling “partnership” a key word in migration, Mr. Swing emphasized, “No single government, international organization or civil society stakeholder can expect to reap migrations benefits or address its challenges by going it alone.”

“The focus right now is on global cooperation,” he continued. “The Global Compact for Migration is a project that deserves close, concerted action from the international community as a whole; not just to conclude negotiations but, beyond that stage, to ensure successful review implementation and follow up.”

Migration needs to recognize the obligations and commitments of all actors in the field of international migration.

Henrietta Holsman Fore, Executive Director of the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), spoke of the challenges facing the world today in supporting people “to move safely and by choice, to help them to make the most of the opportunities and support available to them – especially children and young people.”

Pointing out that “no group of migrants is more at risk,” she elaborated that there are more than million children on the move – more than of half of whom have been driven from their homes by conflict.”

“No single State or Organization can manage migration alone,” she said, stressing the need for everyone to lend “their resources, energies and ideas.”

For his part, Guy Ryder, Director General of the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), called for fair recruitment, skills development, social protection, decent work and respect for labour rights.

“Migration is about work,” he said, emphasizing his office’s mandate “to protect those who are working in countries that are not their own.”

Also speaking, Louise Arbour, [Special Representative for International Migration](#), made clear that in the lead up to the UN’s 2018 International Migration Conference in Morocco later this year, the world’s “collective focus should remain firmly fixed on how to address the daily realities of migrants and their communities of origin and destination.”

Ms. Arbour believes that for safe, orderly migration to succeed, policies must be enacted – based on an sound appreciation of the complex interplay of demographic and economic factors.

“This is a very tall order,” she acknowledged. “Bureaucrats can make the rational arguments. Demagogues can make the publicly appealing ones. Only great political leaders can make both.”

Mr. Swing assured that IOM would strive to expand existing partnerships and build new ones and that “migrants social, economic and health needs are properly addressed, with the collaboration of all relevant actors.”

“Together, we can achieve our common purpose of reaping the benefits of migration for migrants, and destination and origin societies,” he concluded.

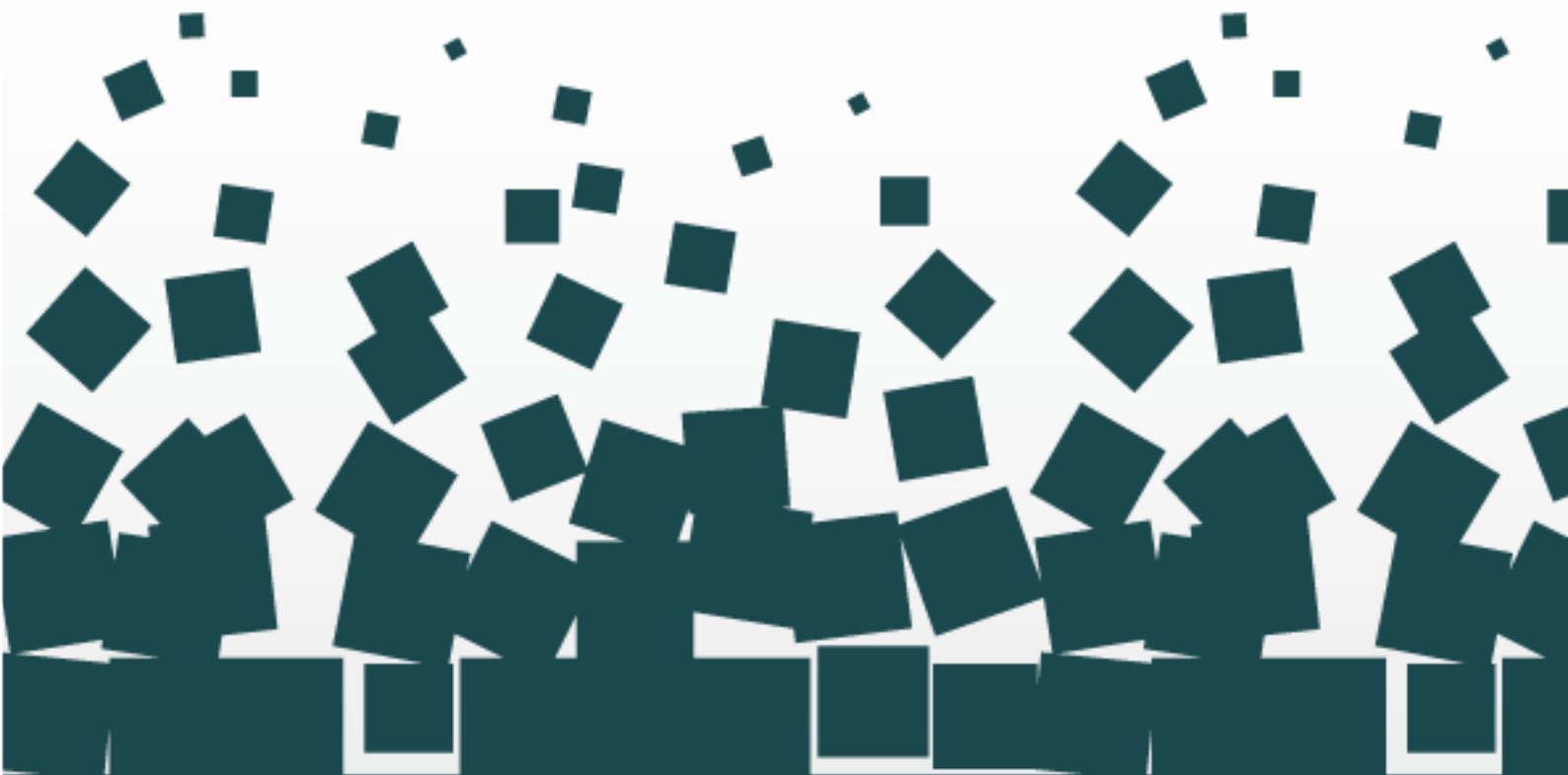
Importance to travel & tourism

Travel and tourism cannot survive without the help of migrants anywhere in the world. Migration is a major job creator for young people who cannot find jobs in their own countries. Rather than see them as a source of cheap labour, a lot more can be done to improve their working conditions.

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



SDG 17: Business leaders at UN forum challenged to invest in a more sustainable future for all





*Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed (left on podium, and on screen) speaks at the opening of the 2018 ECOSOC Partnership Forum. To her right is Marie Chatardová, the President of the Economic and Social Council.
UN Photo/Loey Felipe*

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



SDG 17: Business leaders at UN forum challenged to invest in a more sustainable future for all

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 4 April 2018 - Three years into the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, the United Nations continues brokering new partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), participants told a forum at UN Headquarters on Wednesday.

“Business as usual approaches [won’t work](#),” said Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed at the 2018 ECOSOC [Economic and Social Council] [Partnership Forum](#), an annual event promoting inclusive societies, including through innovative business models and mobilizing big data for public good.

“We need action – and bold action – to build an inclusive, resilient and sustainable future that leaves no one behind,” she continued.

Ms. Mohammed shared a snapshot of today’s world, pointing out that more than eight per cent

of the population lives in poverty; 192 million are unemployed; and young people are three times more likely to be jobless.

“Their voices in many places are stifled and leading to a greater sense of disenfranchisement and disillusionment,” she underscored.

Calling the private sector “an indispensable partner,” Ms. Mohammed stressed the need to work together “to reduce inequalities, end discrimination, empower people and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all.”

Partnering with the private sector is essential to pursue common goals and to align their business models with the 2030 Agenda.

“Sustainable business makes business sense,” she continued. “Better engagement with the private sector requires an enabling policy environment and dialogue mechanisms that encourage firms to do business in a way that works for global good,

and for the bottom line.”

She said that both the Organization and the private sector need to step up efforts and scale up partnerships to generate results that would “reach the furthest communities and villages.”

“Our ambition is nothing less than ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment,” she underscored.

A win-win partnership

Opening the annual forum, Marie Chatardová, [ECOSOC](#) President, pointed out that inclusive development models and combatting inequality was critical to achieving the SDGs, which aim to wipe out poverty and boost equality by putting the world on a more sustainable economic, social and environmental path by 2030.

“It also requires building the resilience of societies, communities and people to cope with shocks – be it natural disasters, economic shocks, conflicts or others,” she said. “To do so, we must reach out to ‘those furthest behind first,’ including women, youth, indigenous peoples and persons living with disabilities.”

Citing research by the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, she argued that sustainable business models could unlock economic opportunities “worth up to \$12 trillion and increase employment by up to 380 million jobs by 2030.”

“The study also shows the majority of companies are already aware that investing in sustainable development goals is a ‘win-win partnership,’” she stressed.

Ms. Chatardová said the private sector can contribute to more inclusive value chains, diversity policies – including marginalized groups in decision-making processes.

“I would also like to take the opportunity to challenge the business leaders present here today to consider making bold commitments to act and invest towards co-designing a more inclusive future for all,” she concluded.

This forum will contribute important elements to a special ECOSOC meeting York in May, which will inform discussions at the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) in July 2018.

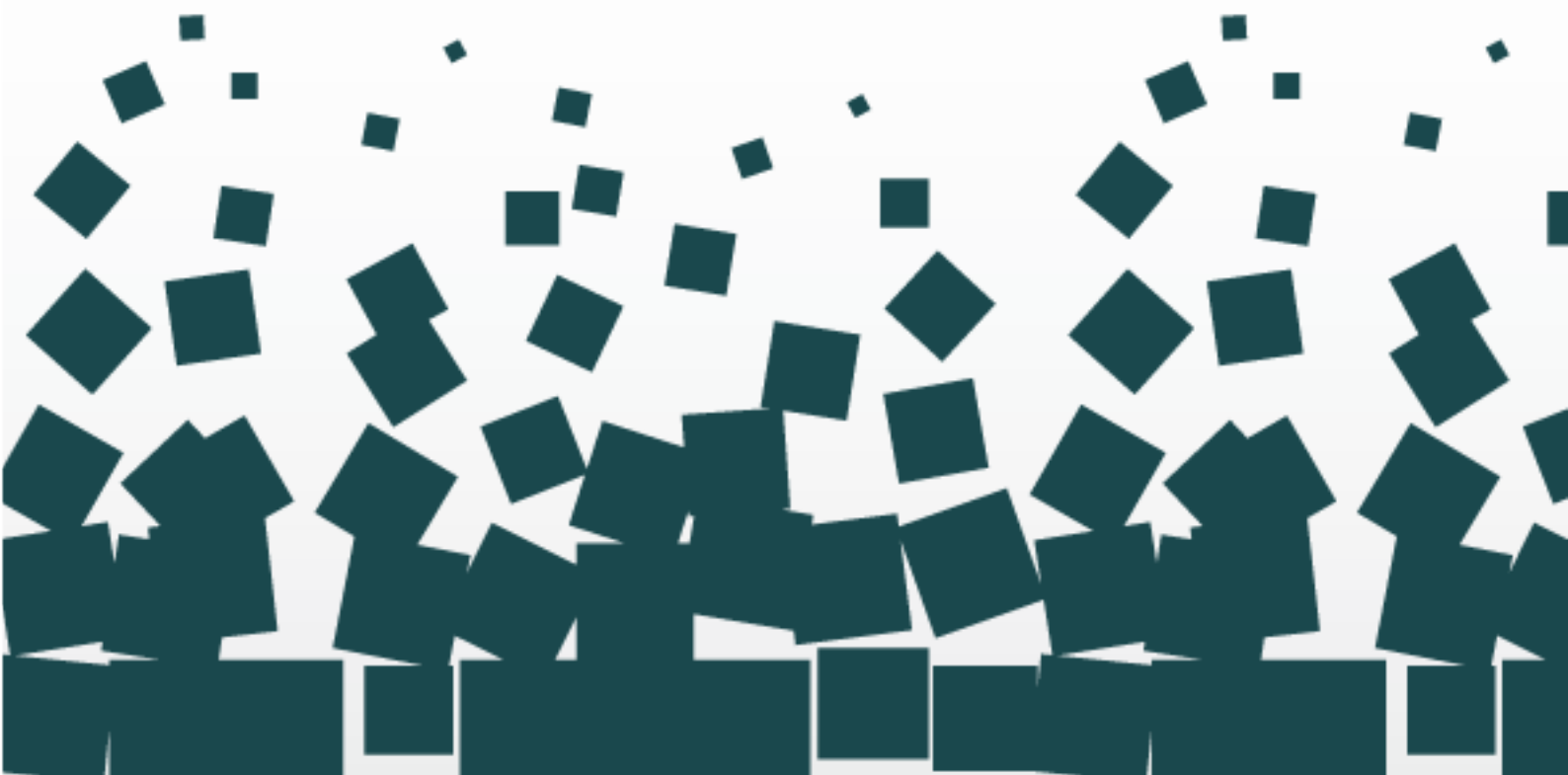
Importance to travel & tourism

Bringing the private sector on board the sustainability agenda has long been on the agenda of the UN SDGs game-plan. There is no doubt that many businesses are marching strongly in unison. But governments can do a lot more to incentivise the mainstreaming of this agenda, such as via tax-breaks. That may encourage businesses to invest strongly in schools, hospitals, social welfare and environmental protection, all of which governments have to do anyway via their own national budgets. It may also help provide private businesses an alternative to stashing money away in tax havens.

17 PARTNERSHIPS
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SDG 17: Japanese athletes begin Olympics 2020 countdown by promoting sports for development





The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges the importance of sports for social progress as well as an important enabler of sustainable development. UNIC Tokyo/Takashi Okano

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



SDG 17: Japanese athletes begin Olympics 2020 countdown by promoting sports for development

United Nations, (UN News Centre) 5 April 2018 - Ahead of the International Day of Sport, world renowned Japanese athletes are joining a United Nations-backed campaign to promote global development goals through the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games their country will host in 2020.

“Let’s use the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics as an opportunity to let the world know about the importance of [SDGs](#) [Sustainable Development Goals],” said [Koji Murofushi](#), the gold medalist in hammer throw at the 2004 Athens Olympics, in his video message.

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its 17 SDGs were adopted by world leaders in 2015 as a blueprint to achieve a healthy planet where people can live free of poverty and hunger by 2030.

“I often see poverty with my own eyes when I go overseas for tennis matches. Now, donation is probably the only way I can contribute but I support activities aiming to eradicate poverty,” said [Mai Minokoshi](#), a professional tennis player, in her message.

The campaign was launched by the UN Information Centre (UNIC) in Tokyo and Japan Sports Agency, with the support of Sport for Tomorrow, a Government-private joint venture, to commemorate the [International Day of Sport for Development and Peace](#), annually observed on 6 April – the day the first modern Olympics was held in 1896.

In the [2030 Agenda](#), sport’s role for social progress is acknowledged as “an important enabler of sustainable development.”



A collage of screen captures from video messages by Japanese athletes joining a United Nations-backed campaign to promote Sustainable Development Goals through sports. Video screen shot

“I believe Olympics and Paralympics symbolize peace. I hope for a day where everyone can live peacefully” says [Taiki Morii](#), a silver medalist in Alpine skiing in 2018 PyeongChang Paralympic Winter Games.

The campaign has now gone beyond Japan, with [Sally Conway](#) of Scotland, who won the bronze medal in judo at the 2016 Rio Olympics, and [Kreshma Rasikh](#) from Afghanistan’s national women soccer team, joining the growing ranks of athletes disseminating their video messages on social media platforms.

The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace was [created](#) by the UN General Assembly in 2013.

In her message for the Day, Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), said that sport relies upon the concepts of respect, understanding, integration and dialogue, and it contributes to the development and fulfilment of individuals regardless of age, gender, origins, beliefs and opinions.

“That is why [sport is a unique forum](#) for action and reflection to transform our societies,” she said.

Importance to travel & tourism

Indeed, sports is good for travel & tourism, promoting higher levels of physical and mental fitness and for general well-being. It brings together people from many different walks of life and enables countries to promote their destinations. Most important, it promotes higher standards of excellence, which can only good for the cause of peace. Fortunately, tie-ups between travel & tourism and sports are gaining strength year after year. High-profile global sports events could take on much greater value by “adopting” just one SDG and seeing it through to fruition.

