

THE OLIVE TREE

Edition 14. July - August 2019

How Travel & Tourism
can help meet the UN
Sustainable
Development Goals



Is travel & tourism abetting the spread of sexually transmitted infections?

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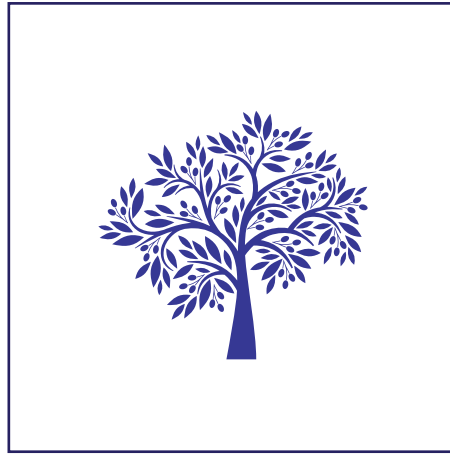
ศาสตร์ของพระราชากับการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน His Majesty's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy for SDGs

หลักปรัชญาของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงเป็นหลักในการคิด ตัดสินใจ และการปฏิบัติ สำหรับการดำเนินชีวิตหรือประกอบกิจการงานใด ๆ ด้วยการใช้ **ความรู้** และ **คุณธรรม** เป็นฐาน ผ่านการไตร่ตรองด้วยหลักสำคัญ ๓ ประการ ได้แก่ พอประมาณ ไม่มากเกินไป ไม่น้อยเกินไป มีเหตุผล ตามหลักวิชาการ มีภูมิคุ้มกัน หรือรองรับการเปลี่ยนแปลงหรือวิกฤตที่อาจเกิดขึ้น 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

Imtiaz Muqbil



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THE OLIVE TREE

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Message from

**GOVERNOR, TOURISM
AUTHORITY OF THAILAND**

YUTHASAK SUPASORN

As always, this 14th edition of The Olive Tree is full of meaningful and relevant content. The TAT is pleased to support this unique publication in facilitating implementation of Thailand's tourism sustainability strategy, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the theme of the 2019 ASEAN Chairmanship, Advancing Partnership Through Sustainability.

In June 2019, Thailand proudly hosted a highly successful ASEAN summit which ended with a call for intensified "cooperation in the pursuit of ASEAN as a single tourism destination which promotes responsible, sustainable, inclusive and balanced tourism development, so as to contribute significantly to the socio-economic well-being of ASEAN people."

The TAT will be exerting maximum efforts to advance this agenda in the years ahead. The collection of news items in this Edition of The Olive Tree provide a lot of food for thought.

I was most impressed to read about China's push to encourage bicycles (Pages 54-58) as a means of public transport. The global travel & tourism industry worldwide can learn a lot from China's transformation from a Kingdom of Bicycles to cars and back again.

ASEAN tourism authorities can do fairly quickly and easily a lot to popularise usage of bicycles. In Thailand, we are making substantial progress. Visitors landing at our main international gateway, Suvarnabhumi airport in Bangkok, are amazed to see its 23.5 kms perimeter ringed by a free-flowing bicycle track, the only airport in Asia to boast such a feature.

Increasingly popular in Bangkok and many other Thai cities, bike tours are wonderful ways to see the back-street heritage areas, with stops at the local food-stalls. Our 55 emerging tourism destinations nationwide are making commendable efforts to promote bike tours.

Many more ideas can be considered. For example, convention delegates can use them for short commutes. Hotels can offer them to guests. Nothing should be ruled out. Every little bit helps.

All this is part of a growing "Back to the Future" global movement designed to revive many simple, easy-going ways of life that were once considered old-fashioned, but are now proving to be realistic and valuable.

I hope all readers take time to think seriously about the many important projects, campaigns and activities being undertaken by the United Nations, as outlined in The Olive Tree.



YUTHASAK SUPASORN
Governor
Tourism Authority of Thailand



Message from **EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

IMTIAZ MUQBIL

Is the travel & tourism industry being impacted by the dangerous rise of religious fundamentalism, xenophobia, militant nationalism, hate speech? Of course it is. What is it doing about it? Not half as much as it could and should be doing.

In the Jan-Feb 2019 Edition 11 of The Olive Tree, I explicitly warned about what I have termed “The Two Global Warmings”. Although this “Socio-Cultural Global Warming” is having a far more immediate and serious impact than “Environmental Global Warming”, our futurist visionary thought-leaders in travel & tourism are still excessively focussed on the latter.

This 14th edition of The Olive Tree features a number of news releases by the United Nations on the Second Global Summit on Religion, Peace and Security in Geneva between 29 April - 01 May 2019 and the 5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue held from 2 - 3 May 2019 in Baku, Azerbaijan. Because both events were held right after the April 21 Easter Sunday church attacks in Sri Lanka, their relevance and context gained added importance.

The UN World Tourism Organisation was a joint coordinator of the Baku event. Just a few weeks later, the UNWTO held its Executive Council meeting in the Azeri capital. And on 23 May 2019, the UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili met Pope Francis and “expressed his gratitude for the Holy See’s commitment to eradicating poverty and promoting peace and intercultural dialogue, both central themes of UNWTO’s mandate.”

Under its former Secretary-General Dr Taleb Rifai, the UNWTO organised a number of conferences on religious and spiritual tourism, primarily to discuss the management and marketing of this rapidly growing segment. Today, their purpose has assumed an entirely new dimension.

The UNWTO needs to upgrade this mandate. One of its sister UN affiliates is the Alliance of Civilisations, set up explicitly to counter the well-known forecast of a Clash of Civilisations, based on the book of the same name by the late Samuel Huntington.

Speakers at the UN events have called for an end to “political opportunism” as well as policies which allow hate speech and violent extremism to flourish. They want to see more support for “moderate politicians” and better mobilization to counter the hate movement.

The High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations Miguel Moratinos has called for a global strategy for intercultural dialogue. “Solutions sought through financial, military and political means take a simplistic view”, he stated. “Unless you understand the mentality of your neighbor, the history of an issue, how you come to this situation, what the consequences are and the relationship is, it is very difficult to find sustainable solutions.”

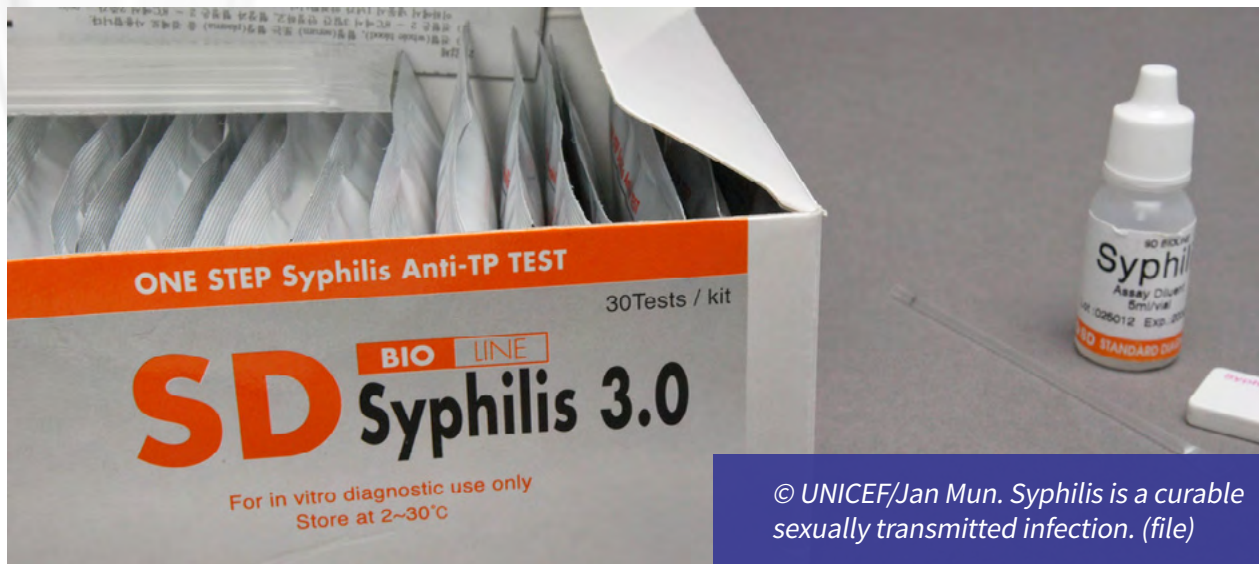
Three issues dominate the agendas of travel & tourism events: Technology, social media and environmental sustainability. Some disruption of that clonalised agenda is long overdue.

SECTION 1



LEAD STORY 1:

Is travel & tourism abetting the spread of sexually transmitted infections?



© UNICEF/Jan Mun. Syphilis is a curable sexually transmitted infection. (file)

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 6 June 2019 - The global scale of sexually transmitted infections (STI) should be a “wake-up call” to governments, UN health experts said on Thursday, citing data showing that one in 25 people today have “at least one” curable STI, which occur at a rate of more than one million a day worldwide.

Highlighting the “concerning lack of progress” by countries in stopping the spread of these and other STIs, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) warned that if left untreated, they can have a profound impact on the health of teens, adults and unborn children.

“This is a wake-up call for a concerted effort to ensure everyone, everywhere can access the services they need to prevent and treat these debilitating diseases”, said Dr Peter Salama, Executive Director for Universal Health Coverage and the Life-Course at WHO.

Negative effects of the four curable STIs covered in the report – chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and trichomoniasis - include neurological and cardiovascular disease, infertility, pregnancy complications, stillbirths, and an increased risk of HIV.

‘No substantial decline’ in infection levels

“On average, these data translate to one in every 25 people globally having at least one of these curable STIs with some of them experiencing multiple infections at one time,” said Dr Melanie Taylor, Medical Epidemiologist at WHO’s Department of Reproductive Health and Research.

Noting the “incredibly high global burden” of STIs, Dr Taylor added that since WHO last published estimates on curable STI levels in 2012, “there has been no substantial decline” in infection levels.

WHO’s findings relate to 2016 global figures for women and men aged 15-49.



© UNHCR/Brian Sokol. Women at a camp for displaced people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo discuss the prevention of sexually transmitted infections like HIV. (file 2014)

Syphilis a leading cause of baby deaths - 200,000 a year

Of more than 376 million infections highlighted in the report, trichomoniasis was the most common, with 156 million cases. This was followed by chlamydia (127 million cases) and gonorrhoea (87 million) while syphilis (6.3 million) caused an estimated 200,000 stillbirths and newborn deaths in 2016, making it one of the leading causes of baby loss globally.

While bacterial STIs can be treated and cured with widely available medications, WHO has warned that recent shortages in the global supply of benzathine penicillin has made it more difficult to treat syphilis.

Antimicrobial resistance to gonorrhoea treatments is also becoming a growing health threat, and may lead eventually to the disease being impossible to treat, it warns. In total, more than 30 different bacteria, viruses and parasites are known to be transmitted through unsafe sexual contact.

Some can also be transmitted by infected blood or blood products, along with contaminated needles shared by drug-users.

Apart from the four curable STIs covered in the WHO report, another four are incurable viruses: hepatitis B, herpes simplex virus (HSV or herpes), HIV and human papillomavirus (HPV). WHO notes that many STIs - including chlamydia, gonorrhoea, hepatitis B, HIV and syphilis - can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy and childbirth.

While someone with a STI may display no obvious sign of it, common symptoms include vaginal discharge, urethral discharge or a burning sensation when urinating in men, genital ulcers and abdominal pain. Symptoms or disease due to the incurable viral infections can be reduced or modified through treatment.

Among its recommendations, WHO advocates for “correct and consistent” condom use and sexual health education. Timely and affordable testing and treatment are also crucial for reducing the burden of STIs globally, the UN agency insists, while also calling for pregnant women to be systematically screened for syphilis and HIV.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Is travel & tourism is a major contributor to this? Of course it is, but the extent of this contribution would be one of the industry's best-kept secrets, for reasons not too difficult to discern. The sex business is closely related to travel & tourism, and was a major cause of the AIDS pandemic in the 1980s. Like many other unsavoury aspects of travel & tourism, this problem is swept under the carpet, which only makes it worse.

LEAD STORY 2:

Global population to rise by 2 billion to hit 9.7 billion by 2050



UNICEF/Sri Kolari. Portrait of Pardhi tribal community members, Maharashtra, India. (7 June 2019)

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 17 June 2019
- By the year 2050, there will be some 9.7 billion people living on Earth, says a UN population report released on Monday. However, the overall growth rate will continue to fall, and more countries will have to adapt to the consequences of an ageing population.

[“The World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights”](#), estimates that the next 30 years will see the global population add an extra 2 billion people to today’s figure of 7.7 billion, and, by the end of the century, the planet will have to sustain around 11 billion.

India will overtake China, sub-Saharan Africa population to double

India is expected to show the highest population increase between now and 2050, overtaking China as the world’s most populous country, by around 2027. India, along with eight other countries, will make up over half of the estimated population growth between now and 2050.

The nine countries expected to show the biggest

increase are India, Nigeria and Pakistan, followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Indonesia, Egypt and the United States of America. In all, the population of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to practically double by 2050.

However, growth in these countries comes against the backdrop of a slowing global fertility rate. In 1990, the average number of births per woman was 3.2. By 2019 this had fallen to 2.5 births per woman and, by 2050, this is projected to decline further to 2.2 births: a fertility level of 2.1 births per woman is necessary to avoid national population decline over the long run (in the absence of immigration).

The population size of more and more countries is actually falling. Since 2010, 27 countries or areas have seen a drop of at least one per cent, because of persistently low fertility rates. Between now and 2050, that is expected to expand to 55 countries which will see a population decrease of one per cent or more, and almost half of these will experience a drop of at least 10 per cent.



UNICEF/Frank Dejongh. Boys taking a bath and having fun in a pond in Zinder, in the center of Niger. (1 June 2019)

In some cases, the falling population size is reinforced by high rates of emigration, and migration flows have become a major reason for population change in certain regions. Bangladesh, Nepal and the Philippines are seeing the largest migratory outflows resulting from the demand for migrant workers; and Myanmar, Syria and Venezuela are the countries where the largest numbers are leaving because of violence, insecurity or armed conflict. For those countries where population is falling, immigration is expected to plug the gaps, particularly in Belarus, Estonia and Germany.

Population report a ‘roadmap to action and intervention’

“Many of the fastest growing populations are in the poorest countries, where population growth brings additional challenges”, said Liu Zhenmin, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). These challenges include the fight to eradicate poverty, and combat hunger and malnutrition; greater equality; and improved healthcare and education. The report, he said, offers a “roadmap” indicating where to target action and interventions.

At the same time, growth is providing opportunities in many developing economies: recent reductions in fertility mean that the working-age population (25 to 64) is growing faster than other age ranges, which could improve the possibilities for faster economic growth. The report recommends that governments make

use of this “demographic dividend” to invest in education in health.

Proportion of older people increasing, life expectancy still lower in poorer countries

There will be one in six people over 65 by 2050, up from the current figure of one in 11. Some regions will see the share of older people double in the next 30 years, including Northern Africa, Asia and Latin America.

By 2050, a quarter of the population in European and Northern America could be 65 or over. The higher proportion and number of older people is expected to put increased financial pressure on countries in the coming decades, with the higher cost of public health, pensions and social protections systems.

Although overall life expectancy will increase (from 64.2 years in 1990 to 77.1 years in 2050), life expectancy in poorer countries will continue to lag behind. Today, the average lifespan of a baby born in one of the least developed countries will be some 7 years shorter than one born in a developed country. The main reasons are high child and maternal mortality rates, violence, and the continuing impact of the HIV epidemic.

“The World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights”, is published by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and provides a

comprehensive overview of global demographic patterns and prospects. The report is based on population estimates from 1950 to the present for 235 countries or areas, underpinned by analyses of historical demographic trends.

The 2019 revision also includes population projections to the year 2100, that reflect a range of plausible outcomes at the global, regional and country levels.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Another two billion people on the Planet in 30 years? Populations will grow but our natural resources will not. In fact, the two forces are pulling in totally opposite directions. More people competing for a shrinking share of natural resources will mean more conflict and violence. Consider the impact of that for human survival.

LEAD STORY 3:

New SDG Advocates sign up for ‘peace, prosperity, people’ and planet, on the road to 2030



United Nations. UN SDGs Advocates

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 9 May 2019 - As the UN and partners around the world push towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, six new influential public figures came on board as official [SDG Advocates](#) on Thursday, committing themselves to the pursuit of the 17 goals on behalf of “peace, prosperity, people, planet, and partnerships.”

“We have the tools to answer the questions posed by climate change, environmental pressure, poverty and inequality”, said [UN Secretary-General](#), António Guterres. “They lie in the great agreements of 2015 – the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change.”

“But tools are no use if you don’t use them. So, today, and every day, my appeal is clear and simple. We need action, ambition and political will. More action, more ambition and more political will,” said the UN chief.

The six new Advocates are:

- His Royal Highness Muhammadu Sanusi II, Emir of Kano (Federal Republic of Nigeria).
- Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Activist, Environment and Indigenous Rights (Republic of Chad).
- Dia Mirza, Actress and Film Producer, UN Environment Program Goodwill Ambassador for India (Republic of India).
- Edward Ndopu, Founder, Global Strategies on Inclusive Education (Republic of South Africa).
- Nadia Murad, Nobel Laureate, Chair and President, Nadia’s Initiative, UN Office on Drugs and Crime Goodwill Ambassador (Republic of Iraq).
- Marta Vieira da Silva, Footballer, Orlando Pride, UN Women Goodwill Ambassador (Federative Republic of Brazil).

They are joining an overall group of 17, who are all committed to raising awareness, inspiring greater ambition, and pushing for faster action on the SDGs, which include the end of extreme hunger, poverty, and quality healthcare for all.

The Advocates represent the universal character of the SDGs themselves, hailing from Governments, entertainment, academia, sport, business and activist organizations around the world.

“By joining forces to achieve our goals, we can turn hope into reality – leaving no one behind,” said Co-Chair of the SDG Advocates group, Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway.

“This is a time of great hope for the world. If we work smartly together and stay on course, we can raise millions out of poverty and significantly expand basic social services for many more by the 2030 end date of the SDGs,” added Co-Chair of the SDG Advocates and President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo.

Mr. Guterres has appointed some members of the previous group of SDG Advocates as SDG Advocate Alumni and said on Thursday he was looking forward to their ongoing support and engagement.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Following this lead, Travel & Tourism could appoint its own set of Advocates to advance the SDG agenda. In fact, SDG advocates could be appointed within individual companies, associations and destinations to accelerate the agenda even further. They could play a great role in enhancing industry awareness of the SDGs and ensuring accountability for producing results.

LEAD STORY 4:

‘Political opportunism’ letting hate speech flourish



UN Photo/Amanda Voisard. Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Adama Dieng briefs the press.

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 1 May 2019 - With murderous attacks against religious institutions on the rise, leaders across the world need to do more to end “political opportunism” and policies which allow hate speech and violent extremism to flourish, said the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide on Wednesday.

Speaking at the end of the [Second Global Summit on Religion, Peace and Security](#), at UN headquarters in Geneva, Adama Dieng noted that in the wake of dozens killed inside Sri Lanka churches, a synagogue attack in California, and killings inside a church in Burkina Faso, the threat of another genocide somewhere, was only growing larger.

“We are speaking about peace, we are speaking about justice, we are speaking about strong institutions”, said the Special Adviser, adding with urgency, that “it’s easy to accuse the extreme right-wing leaders, but what are the others doing?”

More moderate politicians need to be “speaking out” too, and getting “better mobilized, but sometimes you see also the political opportunism, even in those camps”, he said.

This needed to be addressed fast he said, especially in Europe, where the same signs of growing, militant nationalism, that allowed the rise of violent regimes based on racist ideology in the 1930s, can be seen today.

“We need to bring an end to this cynical, politicians’ discourse” said Mr. Dieng. “Big massacres start always with small actions and language”, he warned, noting that the Holocaust against the Jews perpetrated by the Nazis, was preceded by hate speech, and hate crimes, that robbed Jews of their basic humanity.

“We witnessed the same in Rwanda” he said, in 1994, against the Tutsis and others, where they became known as “snakes”. “It started with those words, and what we are seeing today, is pretty close”.

Alliance of Civilizations chief visits Sri Lanka, pledges support of UN

In the wake of the deadly attacks which left more than 250 dead in churches and hotels in Sri Lanka on 21 April, the UN High-Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations ([UNAOC](#)), Miguel

Moratinos, made the first visit by a high-level UN official to the country on Tuesday, expressing support for the Government's efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism.

Mr. Moratinos met top politicians, religious leaders, representatives of civil society and the UN Resident Coordinator as well as the UN Country Team, said a statement released by UNAOC. In his meeting with President Maithripala Sirisena, the High-Representative conveyed "his personal deepest sympathies as well as the heartfelt condolences of the UN Secretary-General.

"You are not alone" he told the President, who expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the visit and support of the High-Representative. President Sirisena said he was "determined to move forward and restore security and safety" to his country.

Mr. Moratinos said the UN stood ready "to support those efforts to help in restoring harmony, unity and social cohesion", stressing that there is an

urgent need to find a long-term solution to the problem of asylum seekers and refugees in Sri Lanka to ensure their safety and well-being. Some 1600 refugees and asylum seekers mainly Ahmadi Muslims had been under attack in the wake of the Easter bombings.

High Representative Moratinos – who has officially been [tasked](#) by UN chief António Guterres to lead an initiative to help ensure the safety of religious sanctuaries – also met Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe, with whom he exchanged views on the current efforts undertaken to restore unity and peaceful co-existence within Sri Lankan society.

In response he has set two "urgent initiatives" in motion; the drawing up of UN plan of action to "fully mobilize" the system to tackle hate speech, led by Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and an effort being led by the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Miguel Moratinos, to help ensure the safety of religious sanctuaries.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

As explicitly warned by this editor in Olive Tree Edition 11 (Jan-Feb 2019), travel & tourism is being impacted by "Two Global Warmings." The emergence of hate speech, ethno-centric extremism, and religious fundamentalism in all their variations are the outcome of a "Socio-cultural Global Warming" which is having a far more immediate and equally serious impact as "Environmental Global Warming". The travel & tourism sector is going overboard in addressing the latter but doing next to nothing to address the former. This blind-spot remains ignored at the industry's peril, as many destinations are finding out.

LEAD STORY 5:

Baku forum to push back against ‘rise of hate’ with strong call for cultural and religious tolerance



Photo: Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Azerbaijan. View of Baku, Azerbaijan.

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 1 May 2019 - Just off a plane from Sri Lanka, [Miguel Angel Moratinos](#), United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations ([UNOAC](#)), said on Wednesday that tomorrow’s [5th World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue](#) is opening at a “very timely” moment.

Speaking in Baku, Azerbaijan, ahead of the UN-backed Forum, Mr. Moratinos told UN News about his “emotional visit” to Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, where he paid his respects to victims of the suicide bombings that took place on Easter Sunday which killed more than 250 people at churches and hotels across several cities.

“Sri Lanka has been an open country with different religions and cultures, and suddenly there was this massacre”, he said, adding that it had dealt a “tremendous blow to a country that is trying to live together in peace.”

While social intolerance is not new, Mr. Moratinos was concerned about what he called “the return of hate.”

“Hate is the word that mobilizes certain communities to destroy”, he said, adding: “It drives people past the point of not being able to live together to the direction of exterminating their opponents and that is very dangerous.”

“This Forum is important to send a strong message to the international community that it is possible to live together, that we can respect each other and that we have to better understand different cultures and religions,” he told UN News.

Complex situations need clarity

He said that as the world is becoming more complex and uncertain, a global strategy for intercultural dialogue is ever more important.

“Solutions sought through financial, military and political means take a simplistic view”, he stated, noting that sustainable solutions require a social-cultural approach that digs deep into the roots of different societies to bring clarity.

“Unless you understand the mentality of your neighbor, the history of an issue, how you come to this situation, what the consequences are and the relationship is, it is very difficult to find sustainable solutions,” he maintained.

The High Representative is taking up this approach wholeheartedly, using it as a new tool “to explore and develop in the near future”.

Mr. Moratinos also spoke about the message of interfaith dialogue and tolerance on which both the Grand Imam of Al Azhar and the Pope agreed.

He said the historic declaration that Al Azhar and the Vatican had produced was about “brotherhood, mutual understanding and overcoming past controversies to look toward the future”.

“And it is not only between Islam and the Catholic Church, they want to go larger, to ask other religious faiths to join them”, he said, noting that it provides “a good basis for discussion and for interreligious dialogue”.

Turning to the global plan of action to safeguard religious sites – a fresh mandate given to UNAOC last month by UN chief António Guterres in the wake of the horrific mass shooting at two New Zealand mosques – Mr. Moratinos told UN News that while working on the draft, his Officer was “shocked by what happened in Sri Lanka”, stressing that those attacks further demonstrated the urgency of developing a plan.

He detailed some of the work his team is doing to this end, such as in Sri Lanka, where they reached out to the Congress of Religions and “went into specific elements”, including on how national legislation should be adapted “to meet new challenges” and the work needed to “put an end to social networks of hate and discrimination”.

The High Representative shared his hope that by end-July a draft plan should be ready for adoption and implementation.

The 5th World Forum, which will open in Baku tomorrow, 2 May and through Friday, will examine the critical role of intercultural dialogue as an actionable strategy for building human solidarity and helping localities counter the violence and discrimination in diverse communities.

Running under the theme Building dialogue into action against discrimination, inequality and violent conflict, the Forum will also host the 2nd High Level Panel of the Heads of International Organizations and the Ministerial Panel, in order to build synergy and partnership among political, economic,

financial, military, humanitarian and social organizations along with other stakeholders to elaborate a common roadmap for assisting public, private and third sector organizations in building inclusive and sustainable societies through promoting intercultural dialogue and human dignity.

The Government of Azerbaijan, in partnership with the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), UNAOC, the UN World Tourism Organization ([UNWTO](#)), the Council of Europe and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) is the host of the Forum.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Mr. Moratinos says that “a global strategy for intercultural dialogue is ever more important.” Has travel & tourism, which claims to be an “industry of peace”, responded to this call? Is it about time to do so?

LEAD STORY 6:

Not faith, ‘but those who manipulate the faithful’ driving wedge between religions



UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi. Heydar Aliyev Centre, Baku, Azerbaijan was designed by Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid.

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 2 May 2019 - Following a string of hate-fuelled attacks on places of worship around the world, the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations ([UNOAC](#)), said on Thursday that it was with a “heavy heart” that he was opening the annual UN-backed forum in Baku, Azerbaijan, on the role of cultural dialogue in building human solidarity and countering violence.

[Miguel Angel Moratinos](#) said the theme of the [5th World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue](#), Building Dialogue into action against discrimination, inequality & violent extremism, was very timely as those gathered at the Forum would no doubt reflect on the “horrific terrorist attacks” that had taken place over recent days and months.

“I stand before you today with a heavy heart”, he lamented, explaining that just yesterday he had been in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where he had paid his respects to the victims of terrorist attacks on Catholic Churches and hotels that left over 250 people dead on Easter Sunday.

Citing a “spate of hate crimes and terrorist attacks” targeting places of worship, Mr.

Moratinos said this was a stark reminder that that “no religion, country or ethnicity is spared” from such unspeakable violence.

He recalled that last Saturday, a synagogue in California was attacked while Jewish worshipers were observing the final day of Passover, and that last year there had been a deadly shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburg. These incidents came amidst similar violence, including an attack on a cathedral in the Philippines, as well as the massacre last month of Muslims worshipping inside mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand.

“In all these heinous and cowardly attacks... we see a common pattern: hatred of the ‘other’, he said. “These criminals are hijacking entire faith communities, pitting religions against each other.”

Yet the problem is never the faith, Mr. Moratinos affirmed, it is “those who manipulate the faithful and turn them against each other by their perverted interpretations of holy texts.”

Social media only adds ‘fuel to the raging fire’

“The volatile nexus between protracted conflicts, terrorism, and violent extremism remains an ongoing challenge for the international community”, he stated, saying that violent extremists seek to “divide and sow instability in our societies”.

According to Mr. Moratinos, social media platforms only add “fuel to the raging fire”, along with the dark web, which offers a space for radicals, white-supremacist and ultra-right advocates to “spew their twisted ideologies”.

He maintained that preventing violent extremism and ensuring sustainable peace are complimentary and mutually reinforcing goals.

“The importance of dialogue as an essential tool for conflict prevention and prevent violent extremism cannot be overstated,” he stressed.

Mr. Moratinos also highlighted the role of youth in providing a counter-narrative for violent extremism through their community engagement promoting inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue and countering hate speech through positive use of social media.

“After all, these young people are our hope not only for the future but also for our present”, he said. “Their work responds to the recommendations outlined in the recent progress study on ‘youth, peace and security’ mandated by the UN Security Council pursuant to [resolution 2250](#), and the [Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism](#)”.

‘No room’ for exclusion

In her opening remarks, Nada Al-Nashif, Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences at the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), stressed the importance of promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Noting that the Baku Process was launched by Azerbaijan over 10 years ago to establish an effective and efficient dialogue between cultures and civilizations, she said that while “we have come a long way”, there is a need to focus and follow up with concrete actions to create continuity and impact.

She pointed to new emerging forces of division that are spreading hatred, intolerance and ignorance.

At a time when cultural diversity is under threat from the pressures of exclusive populism, she noted that “the world is facing the largest refugee and displacement crisis of recent history”.

“New technologies with the potential to better connect individuals and communities, are being misused to seed division and misunderstanding”, she said.

Ms. Al-Nashif stressed the urgent need to bolster inclusion and cohesion in societies undergoing “deep, sometimes unpredictable transformations”, adding that they are also important to catalyze the necessary innovation to advance the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

“Challenges today are complex and pay no respect to borders,” she underscored. “There is no room for unilateralism or exclusion.”

The goal must be “to embrace change on the basis of human rights and mutual respect, to shape it in positive directions, to craft a future that is more just, inclusive and sustainable for every women and man,” she said.

Because “dialogue is key”, she said that is why it “stands at the heart of UNESCO’s mission to build the defenses of peace in the minds of women and men”.

Ms. Al-Nashif said that UNESCO tirelessly protects education as a human right, calling it “the most effective way to disarm processes that can lead to violent extremism, by undermining prejudice, by fighting ignorance and indifference”.

“Diversity is our key resource for achieving inclusive and sustainable societies,” she asserted.

Ms. Al-Nashif concluded by urging everyone to continue working together to promote dialogue “to understand our differences, reinforce our common values, and cooperate together for our common good”.

Baku 'positive platform' process

Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, spoke in depth about the Baku Process, which he credited with focusing international attention on intercultural dialogue, calling it a “good and positive platform to make the right decision”.

Saying that the Baku process is “one of the most important” between Europe and the rest of the world, he underscored: “We need dialogue on cultural, inter-religious, political, economic and security issues.”

Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen, Organization of Islamic Cooperation Secretary General, lamented that today the world is witnessing all kinds of discrimination.

“Terrorism has no religion, race or nationality”, he asserted, calling dialogue between cultures “an absolute necessity”.

Speaking on behalf of the Council of Europe,

Deputy Secretary General Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni argued that inclusive societies, with equal rights and dignity for all, require understanding.

“Promotion of intercultural dialogue is not an event, it is a never-ending challenge” that requires education to ease anxiousness and dispel ignorance, she said. And that by coming together, with mutual assurances, governments pave the way for social inclusion based on political will.

The final speaker at the opening ceremony, Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, spoke passionately on the need for political will to make intercultural dialogue a success.

“We cannot fight the rise of extremism without political will,” he said, castigating the world’s decision-makers – from the global super powers to the UN Security Council – for their inability to deliver much-needed progress on this front.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Note the comment on social media platforms only adding “fuel to the raging fire”. Social media is regularly featured on travel & tourism industry conferences, but the role they play in adding “fuel to the fire” is pointedly ignored. More grist for the mill.

LEAD STORY 7:

Social, cultural diversity ‘an enormous richness, not a threat’



UN Vienna/Nikoleta Haffar. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres (r) meets cellist and UN Messenger of Peace, Yo-Yo Ma in Vienna during a Day of Action.

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 27 May 2019 - Like a well-tuned orchestra, successful modern societies have a balance of diversity and culture, that is a source of “enormous richness, not a threat” said the UN chief on Monday, speaking alongside UN Messenger of Peace, acclaimed cellist Yo-Yo Ma in the Austrian capital, Vienna.

He was speaking against the backdrop of European Parliamentary elections in recent days, which showed a surge in support away from political parties in the centre ground, towards those espousing more nationalist and anti-immigrant policy platforms.

Secretary-General [António Guterres](#) told those gathered for the Day of Action that it was particularly important “in the present debate in Europe” to adopt “a universal perspective for peace, for human dignity, for human rights” and the values enshrined in the [UN Charter](#).

“[Societies today are multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural](#). And that is a richness, not a threat”. Like an orchestra featuring musicians from around the world, they need to practice to play harmoniously: “It is the same with society” he added.

“Diversity requires investment. Social, cultural, political, religious; sometimes investment in social cohesion – to make sure that in a diverse society, every community feels that their identity is being respected – like the identity of the violinist needs to be respected, together with each instrumentalist.

Hailing music as a fundamental tool to promote UN values, he said the Day of Action was fundamental to the future of the Organization “especially when we are also discussing the dramatic situation of human mobility”.



UN Vienna/Nikoleta Haffar. The Swedish teenage climate activist, Greta Thunberg, meets the UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the United Nations in Vienna. (27 May 2019)

Migration too, needs investment, instead of letting people smugglers and traffickers profit from it, and letting fear of migrants fester, “we need to invest in international cooperation, we need to invest in adequate forms of migration”, he said.

Guterres lauds 40 years of UN in Vienna, Austrian World Summit

[Speaking](#) after meeting Austrian President Alexander Van Der Bellen, Mr. Guterres praised the nation for its support for the UN Office at Vienna over the past 40 years, home to many key agencies and bodies.

As one of the main UN headquarters, he said he was convinced the work done in Vienna would help preserve peace and security for the world, during trying times.

He looked ahead to Tuesday’s Austrian World Summit on climate, saying that taking part was essential to him, having convened the Climate Action Summit this coming September.

Fresh from a major [fact-finding visit to the South Pacific](#), Mr. Guterres said that to rescue an island State such as Tuvalu – parts of which are already sinking below the waves due to rising sea levels – was “to rescue the planet”.

“The climate crisis is something that will have an impact on the lives of everybody everywhere”, said the UN chief. “And to reverse the present trend in which climate change is running faster than we are is an absolute must. And for that, we need in 2020, countries to assume engagements much stronger than the ones that were assumed in Paris.

He said nations had to commit “to a much more ambitious set of measures in mitigation in adaptation, mitigation and in finance. And I must tell you that I consider absurd that we are taxing salaries, we are taxing income, and not taxing carbon”.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

In this speech, the UN Secretary-General addressed what I clearly tagged the “Two Global Warmings” in The Olive Tree Edition 11 (Jan-Feb 2019). The solutions to both problems are identical. If global environmental and natural diversity are critical to human survival, so too is socio-cultural diversity. Both help make the world a beautiful place. As I have long argued, threats to both are a “clear and present danger” and must be addressed by travel & tourism.

LEAD STORY 8:

Engaging world's youth vital to preventing violent extremism, building sustainable peace



UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) hosts an event on youth and intercultural leadership at the 5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku, Azerbaijan.

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 3 May 2019 - The spotlight for the second and final day of the [5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue](#) in Baku, Azerbaijan, shined brightly on youth, with a lively discussion on the vital role young people play in countering and preventing violent extremism.

“Youth engagement has become a crucial factor in the global efforts to prevent violent extremism and to build sustainable peace”, said the moderator, [Miguel Moratinos](#), the High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations ([UNAOC](#)), moderator of the event.

“They are not only our present, but our hope for the future,” he stated.

With a focus on education and intercultural and interfaith dialogue, [Youth4Peace: Building a Counter-Narrative to Violent Extremism](#) featured

panelists of diverse backgrounds sharing how their work is making a difference, ensuring that young people’s voices are being heard at the policy level so that youth are seen as champions of change, not just victims or perpetrators of violence.

‘Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness’

From France, astrophysicist Fatoumata Kebe said she had founded Ephemerides, a programme that provides astronomy classes for high school students from disadvantaged background. Although she has worked with NASA, her heart lies in teaching math, physics and chemistry to girls in Mali.

“Only 30 per cent of them have the opportunity to attend school and there, they are not offered science, so I teach them about the solar system”, she said.

She also teaches astronomy to marginalized youth in Paris, including by taking them to meet with staff in the aerospace field.

For his part, Jorge Antonio Chavez Mazuelos, International Relations Master of Arts Candidate at Central European University, spoke passionately about the importance of social inclusion to fight terrorism.

“My father was a police officer whose life was darkened by violence”, he said, noting that in his native Peru, victims of violence are given education rather than monetary reparations.

Jorge founded USIL Ambassadors, Peru’s largest international university club, where he organizes social and cultural activities, and channels study and work abroad scholarships.

He took to heart his father’s wisdom that it was better to light a candle rather than curse the darkness, saying “When we educate, we empower victims of violence and turn on a lighthouse for a whole community”.

Meanwhile, Liyanaarachchige Neluni Tillekeratne, Co-National Director of Sri Lanka Unites, explained that after the civil war in the north, her country tried to reconcile all communities.

“A youth movement was set up 10 years ago as war ended”, she said and since that time, it has

“turned thousands of youth into peacebuilders” by implementing cross- and inter-cultural ideologies to create meaningful relations and friendships “across ethnic and religious lines”.

After the recent violence in Sri Lanka, in which suspected terrorists detonated suicide bombs on Easter Sunday and killed more than 250 people at churches and hotels across three cities, Liyanaarachchige said: “Thousands of our youth stood up and said violence has no place in Sri Lanka and we are now setting up a culture of peace”.

Sara Zaini, Co-Founder and Director of School and Content Development for Emkan Education underscored the importance of early education.

“We were not pleased with the education our children in Saudi Arabia were receiving”, she asserted. “We wanted to give them better opportunities, so almost five years ago, we started a programme to become agents of change there”.

Sara elaborated on implementing the Swedish approach of Kunskapsskolan, where through a portal, students collaborate and work with people and ideas from other countries, cultures and languages.

“This helps to teach critical thinking and offers a platform to engage with counterparts around the world, she said, urging others to “embed change you desire in your community”.



United Nations - Liyanaarachchige Neluni Tillekeratne, Co-National Director of Sri Lanka Unites

‘Engage and listen to youth on their own terms’

In a side event on youth engagement and vocational training, Sevil Alirzayeva, Chief of Staff at the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism ([UNOCT](#)), spoke about the alarming rise in hate speech, xenophobia and other forms of bigotry.

“The international community must stay united and cannot relent in its efforts to prevent and counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations”, she affirmed.

Noting that today nearly half the world’s population is 24 years-old or younger, Ms. Alirzayeva stated that UNOCT prioritizes engaging and empowering youth in the context of counter-terrorism, “especially preventing and countering violent extremism”.

Because young people are affected by terrorism in multiple ways, from being targeted by terrorist propaganda and preyed upon by recruiters to becoming collateral victims of attacks and suffering direct and indirect political, social and economic cost and consequences of terrorism on their communities and societies, she said that they have as much, if not more, of a stake in counter-terrorism, and “we need to engage them more effectively and sincerely”.

“We need to engage youth as partners in building resilience, as positive change-makers, because young women and girls, young men and boys, are central to creating a safer, more inclusive and prosperous world”, she stated.

“If we want to counter the manipulative messages of terrorists to lure young people, we have to engage and listen to them on their terms”.

‘Sustainable peace requires an inclusive approach’

Speaking on behalf of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), Nada Al-Nashif, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences stressed the importance of fostering youth participation in decision-making and in processes for ensuring

peace and security.

Noting that violence, discrimination, hate speech and violent extremism threatens the fundamental rights of citizens all over the world, she said that one of the reasons violent extremism persists is that “youth have been excluded from decision-making processes and have had little opportunity for civic engagement”.

“We must, therefore, provide our youth with the opportunities, and support needed to develop the skills and capacities necessary to overcome the push and pull factors towards violent extremism”, she asserted.

“Sustainable peace requires an inclusive approach to create an environment where youth feel included and engaged as change-makers.”

Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson for the High Representative, UNAOC said the Alliance considers young people essential partners in “fostering mutual understanding between peoples of different cultures and religions, highlighting the will of the majority to reject violent extremism and embrace diversity”.

“[UNOAC](#) has a strong focus on youth-led preventative actions”, she said, noting several examples, including by leveraging new technology.

“Young media makers are encouraged to create content on issues related to migration, diversity and social inclusion for the PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival”, Ms. Saad gave as just one example. Launched in 2009, UNOC and the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) work with a network of [more than 50 partner organizations](#) globally to empower youth to explore pressing social issues.

According to Farid Jafarov, Executive Director of Azerbaijan Youth Foundation, “the most widespread form of terrorism in the modern world is nationalism and religious terrorism”.

For eight years the Foundation has supported youth organization projects for young people aged 16-29 to combat religious extremism, radicalism and domestic violence.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Here, the focus shifts to the youth, exposing another travel & tourism blind-spot. Lots of industry conference include “the Millennials” on their rosters. But discussions usually revolve around jobs, technology and the environment. This editor has yet to see issues related to migration, diversity and social inclusion being seriously and vigorously discussed. Which begs the questions: Why?

LEAD STORY 9:

Appeal to keep working to ‘bridge gap between the like-minded’



Eric Cuvillier/Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan. Night time view of Baku, Azerbaijan.

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 3 May 2019 - As a United Nations-baked intercultural forum drew to a close in Baku, Azerbaijan, the participants agreed that the journey to a better world, fuelled by the discussions over the past two days, including the important input by youth, will continue moving forward.

At the official closing ceremony of the [5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue](#), representatives from across the United Nations family of agencies weighed in on what had done well and what could be improved upon, noting that while dialogue within diverse communities may create tension, it also builds understanding.

Saying that the Forum’s fifth edition had come at “a crucial moment in today’s international arena,” [Miguel Moratinos](#), High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations ([UNAOC](#)), said that through intercultural dialogue, the world was moving towards a “new multilateralism”.

“We are all together here: young, middle class, civil society, the media and the private sector”, he said, praising the diversity of the gathering.

Because the Forum brought together different sectors of society, “Baku has been a success”, he added.

Observing that “multiculturalism is under attack”, he reminded the gathering that in a world of “big data and artificial intelligence, where machines talk to each other, at the end of the day, we still need human contact”.

“The Baku Process does not end today, it must continue,” he underscored, referring to the intercultural dialogue initiative launched by Azerbaijan over a decade ago, and adding that “tonight we are leaving with hope and strength from these endeavours.”

For her part, Nada Al-Nashif, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences at the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), acknowledged that while gains have been made, “we can do better”.

“We must think about the people who are not here, the youth who remain marginalized on vulnerable edges”, she said, stressing that: “Bridging the gaps between the like-minded is the next challenge.”

She detailed the significance of using inter-religious chairs, and hoped that in moving forward, youth would “continue more and more to participate”.



UN News/Elizabeth Scaffidi. Participants at the closing ceremony of the 5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Manuel Butler Halter, Executive Director of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), said “the event put tourism in the right place, which was inspiring and motivating”.

He spoke about how although tourism was often seen from an economic perspective, it “also has a valuable social impact”.

“Tourism is meeting people,” he stressed. “It is an important driving force for intercultural dialogue because it makes more open-minded, creative and inclusive societies.”

Meanwhile, Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) asserted that “we must find remedies to the problems of extremism, radicalism, terrorism and discrimination.”

“Common ground brought us together and the way to save the world is to work together,” he concluded.

Abulfas Garayev, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, observed that the Forum had been a success because, despite the ages, nationalities, religions or any other factors, the people involved used their actions towards achieving the same goal: “A better world.”

The 5th World Forum opened in Baku on 2 May and examined the critical role of intercultural dialogue as an actionable strategy for building human solidarity and helping localities counter the violence and discrimination in diverse communities.

Running under the theme Building dialogue into action against discrimination, inequality and violent conflict, it also host the 2nd High Level Panel of the Heads of International Organizations and the Ministerial Panel, aiming to build synergy and partnership among a diverse array of stakeholders on a common roadmap for assisting public, private and third sector organizations in building inclusive and sustainable societies through promoting intercultural dialogue and human dignity.

The Government of Azerbaijan, in partnership with UNESCO, UNAOC, the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Council of Europe and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), hosted of the Forum.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Note the reference to the rising threats to multi-culturalism and the next challenge: “Bridging the gaps between the like-minded.” Certainly, travel & tourism is an industry of like-minded people in recognising the value of multi-culturalism. So how can we help bridge the gaps?

LEAD STORY 10:

As land conflicts intensify, UN boosts efforts to resolve disputes through mediation



© FAO/Olivier Asselin. Farmers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with access to land for growing crops

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 26 May 2019 - The town of Kitchanga, in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), hosts the highest concentration of internally displaced people in the country, and has been one of the regions most affected by clashes between local communities, made up of Tutsis and Hutus, especially in terms of accessing land.

Today, however, thanks to a UN initiative, many disputes over land in Kitchanga are resolved through dialogue instead of violence, and families can cultivate, rent and make a profit from their land.

Oumar Sylla is the Unit Leader at UN Habitat for the Global Land Tool Network, ([GLTN](#)) a UN-backed alliance of more than 80 organizations looking at the best way of improving land management and land governance overall in the world. In an interview with UN News, he explained how the work of the GLTN has encouraged communities

to settle their differences by talking:

“In areas that have seen conflict, particularly where you have a broken state, or weak institutions, our approach has been to really think about ways to build trust, confidence and reconciliation among communities. We set up a mediation system, in an informal setting, bringing community members around the table to discuss issues, such as historical injustices in terms of land allocation and land occupation, and find a consensus.”

“We found that people had more confidence in informal mechanisms than the courts, because the judicial system is too expensive: if communities can’t pay the lawyer’s fees, they won’t be guaranteed a fair process.”

What do land rights actually mean?

One of the difficulties for UN workers dealing with land conflicts, is that the very concept of land rights is not the same in every country. In many African countries, for example, the custom is for rights to be entrusted to a custodian, who is responsible for distributing land amongst members of the community:

“Traditionally land has been more about common ownership for the whole clan or community, and there was not really a notion of land rights.” Says Mr. Sylla. “The head of the clan or the community is the custodian of the land. In principle he consults with others but, at the end of the day, he is the one who’s taking the decision.”

However, a weakness in the traditional system is that decisions were delivered orally, with no document to verify them, or protect the community in the event of disputes. This is what the GLTN and UN Habitat have been attempting to address:

“Our approach is to help communities to develop a system of mapping their lands, or develop registration systems to establish who is entitled to land rights, so that they can get an official document. In Uganda, for example, we are supporting the government, so that it can deliver so-called ‘customer certificates’ to people living in areas which have traditionally had a custodian system of land rights.”

Pressure on land intensifying worldwide

Globally, the competition for land is growing, and it is a leading cause of conflict. With the pressures on land use – which include climate change, urbanization and the rising population – only likely to become more intense, the UN has taken important measures to improve its response to the problem.

Many of the key United Nations agencies and bodies have accepted that they need to be more effective in dealing with conflict rooted in land disputes, and, following a request by UN Habitat, the UN’s settlement programme, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) endorsed, and released in March 2019, a document entitled “[The United Nations and Land and Conflict](#).”

The guidelines contained in the document are expected to help all parts of the UN to improve their ability to reduce conflicts, protect human rights, and convince affected communities to settle their differences by talking, rather than through violence. UN Habitat described the release of the guidelines as a “milestone in the journey towards a sustained and coherent engagement of the UN system to prevent conflict and sustain peace.”

However, establishing land rights for vulnerable people can be extremely complicated. Oumar Sylla, is the Unit Leader at UN Habitat for the Global Land Tool Network, ([GLTN](#)) a UN-backed alliance of more than 80 organizations looking at the best way of improving land management and land governance overall in the world. In an interview with UN News, he started by explaining that most of the world’s population is living in huge insecurity when it comes to land:

“The Global Land Tool Network was set up because, although land is very important when it comes to human rights and economic opportunity, some 70 percent of the world population don’t have access to formal land title system. This means they don’t have any document saying that they have any rights to land, so they are exposed to the risk of evictions and land grabs. In addition, they can’t sell or rent the land.”

People who have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to conflict, says Mr. Sylla, are particularly vulnerable: “most of the time when people have been displaced for years, they lose their land rights. Decision makers and UN Member States need to take this issue of access to land into account when it comes to rehabilitation, housing and shelter for displaced communities.”

Combating discrimination against women

Another positive impact of mediation in DRC has been the protection of land rights for women. Traditionally, women face discrimination when it comes to land rights but, thanks to the UN initiatives, some progress is being made, and the process has also empowered them:

“Most of the time, we were able to restore a bit of equality, helping women to get access to land in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. More importantly, women are now more and more involved in disputes negotiations, and

are promoting dialogue between communities. Our mediation process, then, has changed the perception of women’s roles in society, and has allowed them to become actors of peacebuilding.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Land is the source of most global conflicts. If disputes can be resolved peacefully in one place, they can be resolved in other places, too. Some of the greatest global hot-spots are located in disputes over land and borders (Palestine, Kashmir, Korea, etc). If they can be resolved peacefully, travel & tourism will be a primary beneficiary.

LEAD STORY 11:

‘Lungs of the Planet’ keep us alive: 5 things you need to know about forests and the UN



Olga Lavrushko. My favorite place by Olga Lavrushko, Ukraine. One of the winners of the International Forest Photograph Contest.

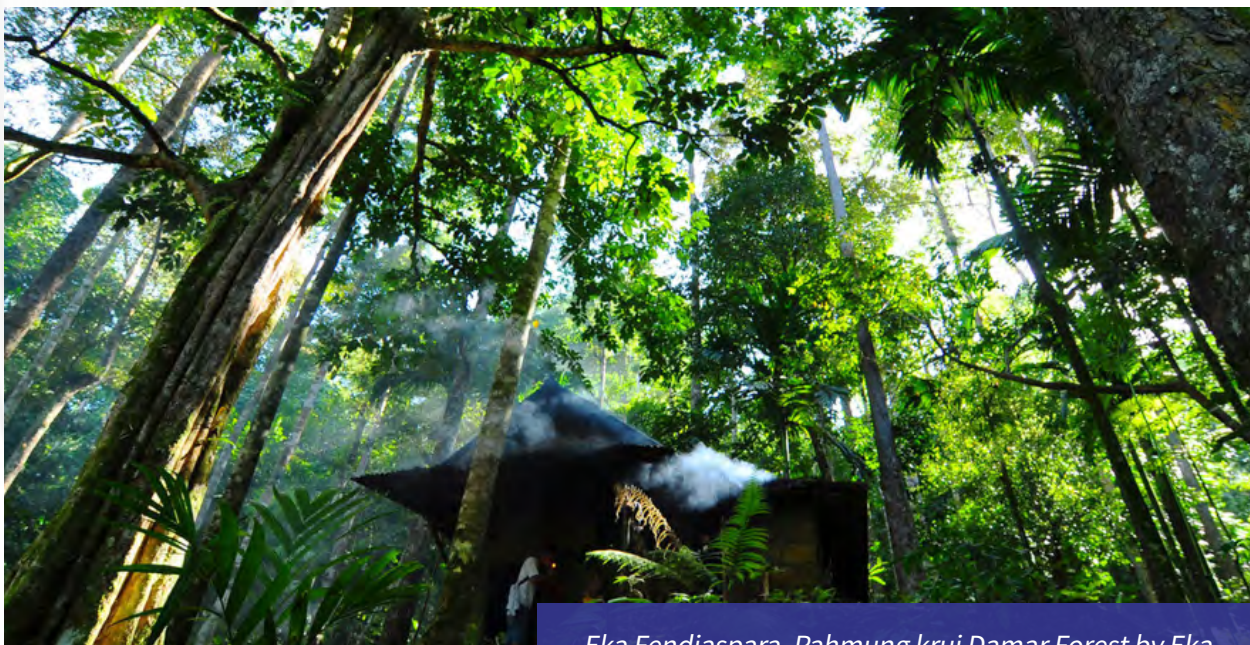
United Nations, (UN News Centre), 10 May 2019 - Forests are vitally important for sustaining life on Earth, and play a major role in the fight against climate change. With the 2019 session of the United Nations Forum on Forests wrapping up on Friday in New York, we delve deeper into the subject, and find out what the UN is doing to safeguard and protect them.

1. Forests are the most cost-effective way to fight climate change

Arguably, protection and enhancing the world’s forests is one of the most cost-effective forms of climate action: forests act as carbon sinks, absorbing roughly 2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. Sustainable forest management can build resilience and help mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Speaking at the 2018 UN climate conference ([COP24](#)) in Katowice, Poland, Liu Zhemin, head of the UN’s Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), said that “forests are central in developing solutions both to mitigate and adapt to climate change, adding that “these terrestrial ecosystems have already removed nearly one third of human-produced carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere. Through sustainable forest management, they could remove much more.”

At this week’s meeting session of the UNFF, it was noted that forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation actions, if fully implemented, could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by around 15 gigatonnes of CO₂ a year by 2050, which could potentially be enough to limit warming to well below 2°C (the target set by the international community in 2015). Today, fossil fuels emit 36 gigatonnes every year.



Eka Fendiaspara. Pahmung krui Damar Forest by Eka Fendiaspara, Indonesia. One of the winners of the International Forest Photograph Contest.

In addition, as renewable sources increasingly replace fossil fuels, forests will become more and more important as sources of energy: already, forests supply about 40 per cent of global renewable energy in the form of wood fuel – as much as solar, hydroelectric and wind power combined.

2. The goal of zero deforestation is close to being reached

Significant progress has been made in international forest protection over the past 25 years. The rate of net global deforestation has slowed by more than 50 per cent, a credit to global efforts to sustainably manage existing forests, while at the same time engaging in ambitious measures to restore degraded forests and land, and to plant more trees to meet the demand for forest products and services.

The goal of zero net global deforestation is close to being reached, bringing the world one step closer to the UN Strategic Plan for Forest's target to expand global forest area by 3 per cent by 2030, an area of 120 million hectares, about the size of South Africa.

3. The biggest threat to forests is...agriculture

Many people will be aware of the devastating effects that illegal and unsustainable logging has on forests, but the biggest global driver of deforestation is actually agriculture, because of the extent to which forests are converted to farmland and livestock grazing land: a key challenge is how to manage the ongoing increase in agricultural production, and improve food security, without reducing overall forest areas.

A major [UN report on biodiversity](#), released in May, made headlines around the world with its headline figure of one million species at risk of extinction, warned against the destruction of forests, noting that this “will likely have negative impacts on biodiversity and can threaten food and water security as well as local livelihoods, including by intensifying social conflict.”



WFP/Rocío Franco. Honduras, 24 May 2018. This micro basin in Honduras' Dry Corridor was much smaller a few years ago, mainly due to deforestation. The Dry Corridor is not a desert, but is prone to droughts that are sometimes severe. This is why it's important to manage rainwater.

4. The UN's growing role in forest protection

The first time forests came to the forefront of the international agenda was at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, widely regarded as one of the landmark UN conferences. The Summit led to the adoption of Agenda 21, the first significant international action plan for achieving sustainable development, which noted the “major weaknesses in the policies, methods and mechanisms adopted to support and develop the multiple ecological, economic, social and cultural roles of trees, forests and forest lands.”

The Earth Summit also saw the adoption of the Forest Principles which, although non-legally binding, was the first global consensus reached on the sustainable management of forests. The Principles called for all countries to make efforts towards reforestation and forest conservation; enshrined the right of nations to develop forests in keeping with national sustainable development policies; and called for financial resources to be provided for targeted economic policies.

To better co-ordinate international efforts to put the principles into practice, an inter-governmental panel and forum were set up in the 1990s, to be replaced in 2000 by the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), which meets every year at UN Headquarters in New York to monitor progress on the implementation of the six Global Forest Goals.

The Goals set targets for the sustainable management of forests, and reduction of deforestation and forest degradation, and were developed as part the forest community's response to the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN's overall blueprint for economic progress that protects the environment and humanity.



UN News/Jing Zhang. The forests in the Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia are home to bears, wolves and many rare bird species.

5. This year's top priorities: climate change and the real cost of deforestation

One of the key take-aways from the 2019 session of the UN Forest Forum was that, too often, forests are under-valued, because it's hard to put a clear monetary value on all of the positive contributions they make to the world.

As a result, the true cost of deforestation and forest degradation is not taken into account when policy decisions are made on land use, such as decisions to clear forest land to use for commercial agriculture.

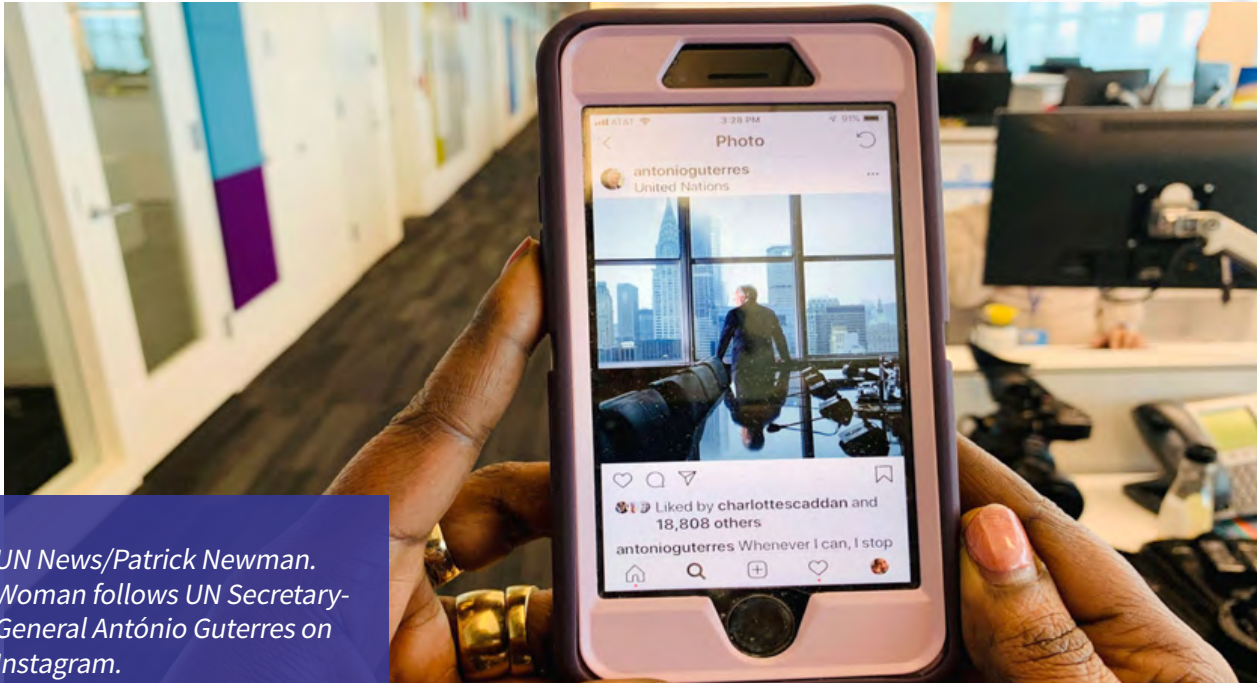
The importance of financing was another important element of the session: sufficient funding is an essential element in ensuring effective action to halt deforestation and forest degradation, promote greater sustainable forest management and increase the world's forest area: despite the central role forests play in protecting the environment, only 2 per cent of funds available for climate change mitigation are available for efforts to reduce deforestation.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

What are the ecotourism practitioners doing about this? Can they prove that years of promoting ecotourism has done anything whatsoever to help preserve forests? Showing some tangible results in this area may help them advance the cause.

LEAD STORY 12:

From his room with a view, UN chief takes to Instagram with an eye on hope and a brighter future



*UN News/Patrick Newman.
Woman follows UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Instagram.*

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 9 May 2019 - United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has long highlighted the importance of young people in addressing the challenges confronting the world. And on 4 May, he took a page from their book and opened [an Instagram account](#), reinforcing his role as the UN's "lead influencer".

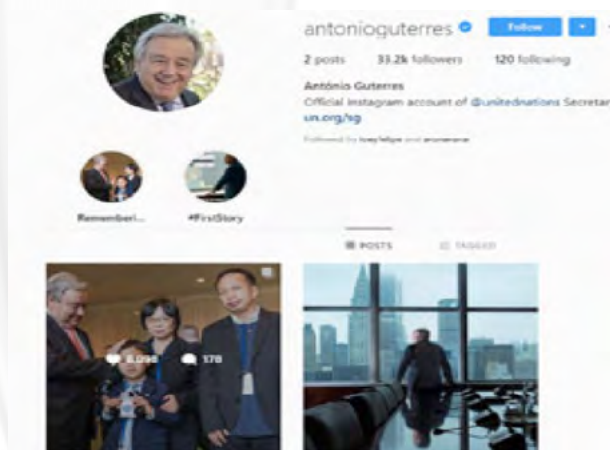
The move was an immediate success. In just five days, the UN chief's new account has garnered over 32,000 followers; the highest number from the United States, followed by Mexico, India, Brazil and the United Kingdom.

The fast-growing Instagram platform is very popular with young audiences, as evidenced by the majority of followers so far, who are between the ages of 18 and 34.

Providing social media fans with access to content not seen anywhere else, Mr. Guterres' first post, pictured above, was both personal and authentic.

"Looking out at this vibrant and diverse city, I remember all the villages and towns the world over, where I've heard people express the same, simple hope – for a life of dignity and security on a planet that is thriving", he wrote next to the photo of him taking in the stunning view from his office.

In a time where people are most influenced by those they trust and about whom they care, Instagram plays a key role in building that support for the UN and what it has to say.



Powered by strong visuals and messaging the launch of the @antonioguterres Instagram account was supported both inside and outside the UN system and has already measured high numbers of engagement and audience growth.

Building trust

With over 20,000 engagements, or people who have responded to the Secretary-General's content, his very first post went viral. What's more, comments from followers have been overwhelmingly positive and supportive.

On this new platform, Mr. Guterres can share a personal, inside look into his work and the priorities of the Organization.

Spreading the word

And his posts have already been noticed throughout cyberspace. Some of the UN agencies, Goodwill Ambassadors, Messengers of Peace, and other supporters who started following, have been spreading the word to their respective supporters to follow as well.

A case in point is UN environment's Goodwill Ambassador Aidan Gallagher who encouraged his young and devoted fans to support the Secretary-General. This helped the UN chief kick off his account with exactly the youthful demographic he wants to hear the UN's message.

And his ability to bring other major influencers on board has not waned. Malala, Leonardo DiCaprio and Yo-Yo Ma are just a small sample of the more than 60 celebrities following the UN chief. Moreover, he has amassed attention from over 20 Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society accounts.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

While some world leaders use their social media accounts to spew stupidity, it is gratifying to see at least one leader trying hard to spread a message of peace and hope. It is absolutely true that the world over, "people express the same, simple hope – for a life of dignity and security on a planet that is thriving." Travel & Tourism shares these values.

SECTION 2





SDG 1:

**World Bank
downgrades global
growth forecasts,
poorest countries
hardest hit**



World Bank/Rob Beechey. Dar es Salaam Port, Tanzania.



SDG 1: World Bank downgrades global growth forecasts, poorest countries hardest hit

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 5 June 2019 - The World Bank has lowered its expectations of global economic growth for this year in a new report. It says that, although the picture for poorer countries is expected to stabilize in 2020, economic momentum remains weak.

The risks to emerging and developing economies include rising trade barriers, slow investment, and economic slowdowns in richer countries. “Stronger economic growth is essential to reducing poverty and improving living standards,” said World Bank Group President, David Malpass, in a statement released on Tuesday.

It is urgent, he added, that countries make significant reforms to improve the climate for business, and attract investment. “They also need to make debt management and transparency a high priority so that new debt adds to growth and investment.”

All regions affected by slowdown

Amongst the developed economies, the Euro Area will see the biggest slowdown, due to weaker exports and investment, with growth at around 1.4% in 2020-2021. As for the United States, a growth figure of 2.5% in 2019, will drop to 1.7% next year.

In emerging markets, the projected growth rate of 4% for 2019 represents a four-year low, and several economies are coping with financial stress and political uncertainty. However, A recovery is expected next year, with a forecasted rate of 4.6% for 2020. The World Bank recommends in the report that these countries need to strike a careful balance between borrowing to promote growth and avoiding risks associated with excessive borrowing.

“While almost every economy faces headwinds, the poorest countries face the most daunting challenges because of fragility, geographic isolation, and entrenched poverty,” said World Bank Group Vice President for Equitable Growth, Finance and Institutions, Ceyla Pazarbasioglu. “Unless they can get onto a faster growth trajectory, the goal of lowering extreme poverty under 3 percent by 2030 will remain unreachable.”

The warnings from the World Bank come just days after the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs published its mid-year [World Economic Situation and Prospects](#) (WESP) report, which finds that all major developed economies, and most developing regions, have weakened prospects for growth.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

In addition to geopolitical threats, the international scenario is being complicated by economic threats, again caused by the same global powers responsible for the geopolitical threats. The fact that travel & tourism industry leaders do not even attempt to demand accountability is absolutely shocking.



SDG 1:

Amidst high trade tensions and policy uncertainty, UN cuts economic growth forecast



World Bank/Chhor Sokunthea. A farmer harvests mung beans in Cambodia's northern province. After harvest season, farmers like her move from the lowlands to the highlands to get better value for their crops.



SDG 1: Amidst high trade tensions and policy uncertainty, UN cuts economic growth forecast

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 21 May 2019 - Against a backdrop of unresolved trade tensions, high international policy uncertainty and softening business confidence, the UN on Tuesday announced a broad-based slowdown in the global economy and cut its growth predictions.

The data comes from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in its [mid-year World Economic Situation and Prospects](#) (WESP) report, which finds that all major developed economies, and most developing regions, have weakened prospects for growth.

At the launch of its [main annual report](#) in January, UN economists warned of “risks on the horizon.” Five months on, with trade disputes and tariff increases, those fears have been borne out, and the forecasts contained in the January report have now been revised downwards: growth for

2019 is now predicted to be a moderate 2.7 per cent, down markedly from 3.4 per cent in 2018.

DESA warns, however, that if trade tensions escalate further, the effects of climate change accelerate, or there is a sudden deterioration in financial conditions, the slowdown could be sharper, or more prolonged.

Slowdown threatens UN agenda to end poverty

The predicted slowdown spells bad news for efforts to implement the UN’s 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, which contains a set of targets to end extreme poverty and promote prosperity, whilst protecting the environment.

A weaker global economy puts essential investments in areas such as education, health

and climate action at risk. Developing countries are likely to be hit hard, particularly those whose economies rely heavily on markets likely to be affected by any additional tariffs and subsequent retaliatory measures.

The report notes that, although poverty is concentrated in rural areas, the rapidly growing rate of population movements from the countryside to cities, must be carefully managed. This is particularly relevant for Africa and South Asia, the two regions with the highest number of people in poverty, which are expected to also experience the most rapid pace of urbanization in the next two decades.

Calling for more comprehensive and better-targeted policies to tackle the slump, Elliot Harris, UN Chief Economist and Assistant Secretary-

General for Economic Development, said in a [statement](#), “It is increasingly clear that policies to promote sustainable development will need to look beyond GDP growth and identify new and more robust measures of economic performance that appropriately reflect the costs of inequality, insecurity and climate change.”

With the [climate emergency](#) continuing to cause more frequent and intense natural disasters, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable countries, the report calls for a multilateral approach to global climate policy, including an explicit call for carbon pricing, which would force the private sector and governments to include the environmental costs of consumption and production in their economic decision-making process.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Heed this important statement: “It is increasingly clear that policies to promote sustainable development will need to look beyond GDP growth and identify new and more robust measures of economic performance that appropriately reflect the costs of inequality, insecurity and climate change.” Many NGOs and civil society activists were saying this for years. The people at the top did not listen. The price is being paid now.



SDG 3:

**Bicycle Kingdom'
makes a comeback,
as China tackles air
pollution crisis**



Yimin Feng. Youth riding share bikes and hanging out by the UNESCO World Heritage Site West Lake in Hangzhou, China.



SDG 3: Bicycle Kingdom' makes a comeback, as China tackles air pollution crisis

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 3 June 2019 - Cars have replaced bicycles as the primary means of transport in many Chinese cities but, with air pollution a major problem for the country, the bike is making a comeback, thanks to digital technology, and some 21st Century thinking.

China was once considered to be the “Kingdom of the Bicycle,” with bikes dominating city streets across the country, but over the past four decades, China’s dramatic economic prosperity and urbanization has seen many people move to motor vehicles as their primary means of transport, contributing to a marked deterioration in air quality.

In Hangzhou, a city in eastern China that was once described by the Italian explorer Marco Polo as “the finest and most splendid city in the world,” air pollution has had a devastating effect. According to [data](#) backed by the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), Hangzhou’s air pollution is well over WHO’s safe level.

However, in a bid to improve public health and the environment, the Hangzhou authorities have put a fresh emphasis on cycling, which, allied with digital technology, is helping to cut pollution: other cities are following their example.

Over the past decade, the local government has been improving bike-friendly infrastructure, such as lanes and traffic signals created solely for cyclists, and has provided almost 86,000 public bikes. A smart card allows users to easily access all forms of public transport, from bikes to boats to buses.

“All together there have been 760 million rides, that’s almost half the population of China,” says [Tao Xuejun, general manager of the Hangzhou Public Bicycle Service](#). “So far, more than 400 cities in China have adopted our project. Our dream is to promote our model across China and all over the world.”

As a result of these initiatives, according to Tao, cycling has become a popular choice for both local citizens and tourists, and the efforts of the Government-run company have been rewarded with international recognition, including the International Ashden Award for Sustainable Travel in 2017.

A mobile app that plants millions of trees

As well as leading the Chinese cycling resurgence, Hangzhou is home to an innovative way to encourage more sustainable lifestyles, with an app that is helping to stop desertification, cut air pollution and plant millions of new trees.

The “Ant Forest” mini-program, a Hangzhou-based project from giant Chinese payments and lifestyle app Alipay, incites users to make small, environmentally friendly decisions in their daily lives, such as cycling rather than driving to work, or recycling clothes. When users perform any carbon-reducing activities, they are rewarded with “green energy” points.

As they accumulate enough virtual points, a real tree is planted. According to Ant Financial, more than 100 million trees have been planted, thanks to the low-carbon actions of 500 million individuals, roughly 5% of the world’s population.



Beijing’s fight to see through the haze

Internationally, one of the best-known examples of harmful air pollution affecting quality of life in a city, is the Chinese capital, Beijing.

Beijing’s remarkable development over the last two decades saw a significant, and visible, rise in air pollution, due to a combination of factors, including coal-related pollutants; the growth of motor transport, especially logistics freight trucks; heavy industry; and dust from buildings and roads, according to one of the main authors of a UN led report, [A review of 20 Years’ Air Pollution Control in Beijing](#).

Fine particulates – tiny, invisible airborne particles – are largely responsible for deaths and illnesses from air pollution. The smallest, and deadliest, are called PM2.5 particles, which bypass the body's defences and lodge in the lungs, bloodstream and brain. Business, public buildings and households account for around half of PM2.5 emissions.

Today, fine particulate pollution in Beijing's air is still 7.3 times the safe level the WHO's annual safe level, but the local and regional governments have managed to improve the situation in recent years.

By working together on a strategy to tackle the problem, by using the legal, economic and technological tools at its disposal, the concentration of fine particles in the air fell by one third, beating the target set by the State Council, China's main administrative body.

"Beijing has achieved impressive air quality improvements in a short amount of time," said Dechen Tsering, Director of UN Environment's Asia Pacific Regional Office. "It is a good example of how a large city in a developing country can balance environmental protection and economic growth," she stressed.

China is hosting the 2019 UN [World Environment Day](#) on June 05, with air pollution as the theme. The main events marking the day, will take place in Hangzhou.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Bicycles were once seen as indicators of an "under-developed country." Now, they are the in-thing, contributors to both human and environmental health. Think about it: Many other practises and lifestyles of the bygone days were also far more sustainable, such as indigenous wisdoms. They all deserve to come back into vogue. Travel & tourism can help facilitate that 'back to the future' process.



SDG 3:

**Pedal power makes
'positive impact on
climate'**



Pix: Msichana Initiative. One girl One bike, an initiative of a Non governmental organisation in Tanzania which aims to provide bicycles to school girls to ensure mobility to and from school.

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



SDG 3: Pedal power makes ‘positive impact on climate’

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 3 June 2019. The simple, affordable, and environmentally friendly bicycle is not just a means of transportation, but also “a tool for development”, the United Nations said in a message on Monday commemorating World Bicycle Day.

Taking to two wheels fosters “sustainable consumption and production”, and has a “positive impact on climate”, according to the UN.

Moreover, biking enhances access to education, health care and sport; and the synergy between the bicycle and the cyclist raises a more intimate and immediate awareness of the local environment.

According to the UN Environment Programme, even though the benefits of investing in pedestrians and cyclists can “save lives, help protect the environment and support poverty reduction”, the mobility needs of people who walk and cycle, mostly urban dwellers, “continue to be overlooked”.

“The price paid for mobility is too high, especially because proven, low-cost and achievable solutions exist”, underscores UNEP’s Share the Road Programme Annual Report 2018. “No-one should die walking or cycling to work or school”.

The Programme continues to advocate for action, working with countries around the world to prioritize the needs of pedestrians and cyclists – a critical part of the mobility solution for helping cities break the link between population growth and increased emissions, and to improve air quality and road safety.

According to the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), safe infrastructure for walking and cycling is also a pathway to greater health equity for the poorest urban dwellers, by providing transport “while reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke, certain cancers, diabetes, and even death”.

A ‘crucial contribution’

UN Headquarters in New York marked the day with a special outdoor event, which General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa observed comes “at a crucial time” as there are only 11 years left “to avoid the worst impacts of climate change”.

With 2030 marking the deadline for the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), she encouraged support for new technologies, adding that “we must also ensure we are

harnessing existing tools, such as the bicycle”.

“From reducing transport emissions and road deaths to tackling obesity and noncommunicable diseases, improving rural connectivity and empowering women and girls, bicycles can make a crucial contribution”, she stated.

Noting that transport is the third-largest source of CO₂, Ms. Espinosa cited studies showing that if just 10 per cent of city journeys were taken by bike, urban transport emissions would fall by 7 per cent.

“It would also contribute to reducing air pollution – the theme for this year’s World Environment Day – helping to save the lives of some 7 million people a year”, she pointed out. “And I suspect there would be a significant boost – to the economy and to more peaceful societies – if people were not gridlocked in traffic.”

“So, we must do more to integrate bicycles into urban and rural planning, infrastructure and design”, she urged. “And we must invest in education to promote the multiple benefits of cycling”.

World Bicycle Day encourages:

- Member States to consider the bicycle in cross-cutting development strategies, including in international, regional, national and subnational development policies and programmes

- Member States to improve road safety and integrate it into sustainable mobility and transport infrastructure planning and design.
- Everyone to use the bicycle to foster sustainable development, strengthen education, promote health and facilitate social inclusion and a culture of peace.
- Member States to promote the bicycle throughout society and welcome initiatives to organize bicycle rides at the national and local levels as a means of strengthening physical and mental health and well-being and developing a culture of cycling in society.

After speaking at the event, *UN News* caught up with Phil Southerland, CEO and co-founder of Team Novo Nordisk, an American global all-diabetes sports team of cyclists, triathletes and runners.

At just seven months old, Mr. Southerland was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Living in Tallahassee Florida, his parents were told that he would be dead or blind by age 25. Fortunately, at 12 years-old he discovered bicycling.

While helping a friend in college to manage his own type 1 diabetes, Mr. Southerland realized the value of using the bike as a means to “show the world that exercise is the billion-dollar drug that never gets prescribed”.

The athlete is living proof that “you can still chase your dreams with diabetes”.



BreakThroughMedia. Ambassadors from Indonesia, New Zealand and Bahrain joined athletes from Team Novo Nordisk, the world’s first all diabetes sports team, to celebrate the World Bicycle Day at UN Headquarters in New York. Team Novo Nordisk CEO and Co-Founder Phil Southerland is standing to the left of Billy, the mascot.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Governments and urban authorities spend gargantuan amounts of money building energy-guzzling mass transit systems for commuters. Yet, they do not take the simple step of building covered bicycle lanes that could protect bikers against the sun, rain and traffic accidents. That simple move alone could revolutionise urban transport. If anyone has an explanation for that lapse, I would love to hear it.



SDG 3:

With a premature death every five seconds, air pollution is violation of human rights



© UNICEF/Mungunkhishig Batbaatar. Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, suffers from severe air pollution. (January 2018)



SDG 3: With a premature death every five seconds, air pollution is violation of human rights

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 3 June 2019 - An independent UN expert said on Monday that the failure of governments across the world to ensure clear air, constitutes a “violation of the rights to life, health and well-being, as well as the right to live in a healthy environment.”

Ahead of the 2019 [World Environment Day](#) on Wednesday, which has air pollution as its theme, David Boyd, the UN’s Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, called on states to take urgent action to improve air quality in order to fulfill their human rights obligations.

Air pollution is a deadly, man-made problem, responsible for the early deaths of some seven million people every year, around 600,000 of whom are children. It is estimated that 90 per cent of the world’s population breathe polluted air.

Every five seconds, somebody around the world dies prematurely as a result.

In a statement, Mr. Boyd said that uncontaminated air is a core component of the right to a healthy environment, together with clean water and adequate sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food, a non-toxic environment, healthy biodiversity and a safe climate.

“The right to a healthy environment is fundamental to human well-being and is legally recognized by over 150 States at the national and regional levels. It should be globally reaffirmed to ensure the enjoyment of this right by everyone, everywhere while upholding the human rights principles of

universality and non-discrimination.”

Mr. Boyd described the efforts of China, host of this year’s World Environment Day, to tackle air pollution, as a “success story.” Although the Chinese capital, Beijing, has become synonymous with dirty air over the past few decades, a concerted effort by local and regional authorities has seen an improved situation in recent years, with the concentration of fine particulates – the tiny, invisible airborne particles that are largely responsible for deaths and illnesses from air pollution – falling by a third.



© UNICEF/Bindra. Vehicle emissions, diesel generators, the burning of biomass and garbage have all contributed to poor air quality in Lagos Lagoon in Nigeria. (file 2016)

The UN expert reiterated his recommended measures for reducing air pollution, contained in a [report](#) presented to the UN Human Rights Council in March. These include monitoring air quality and impacts on human health; assessing sources of air pollution; establishing air quality legislation; and developing air quality action plans.

“In celebration of World Environment Day, I urge States to take bold action to beat air pollution, improve health, address climate change, and fulfill their human rights obligations,” the expert said.

World Environment Day, celebrated since 1974, is the United Nations day for encouraging worldwide awareness and action to protect the environment. It is organized around a theme that addresses a particularly pressing environmental concern.

In a [video message](#) released ahead of the Day, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that, as well as claiming millions of lives every year, and damaging children’s development, many air pollutants are also causing global warming. Mr. Guterres called climate change an “existential threat,” and pressed the international community to “tax pollution, not people” and stop building coal plants.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

What’s the difference between air pollution and smoking? As a health hazard, none, with the sole exception that smokers willingly chose to inflict it upon themselves, while those who breathe polluted air daily have little choice. All created by those trappings of “development” – cars, factories and other drivers of economic growth powered by fossil fuels.



SDG 3:

**‘Catastrophic’
healthcare costs
put mothers and
newborns at risk**



Pix: UNICEF/Jan Zammit. A mother and her new born baby at the National Health Center for Mother and Child, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. (4 September 2015)



SDG 3: ‘Catastrophic’ healthcare costs put mothers and newborns at risk

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 3 June 2019 - Pregnant women are putting their lives and their babies at risk because of “catastrophic” and prohibitive healthcare costs before, during and after childbirth, UNICEF said on Monday.

In a new report highlighting how few of the world’s poorest pregnant women have a doctor, nurse or midwife at their side when they need them most, the UN Children’s Fund said that more than 800 women die every day from complications, while many more mothers live with “debilitating” outcomes.

At least 7,000 stillbirths also occur every day - half being babies who were alive when labour began - while 7,000 babies also die in the first month of life, [UNICEF](#) said.

“For far too many families, the sheer costs of childbirth can be catastrophic. If a family cannot afford these costs, the consequences can even be fatal”, said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “When families cut corners to reduce maternal health care costs, both mothers and their babies suffer.”

More than five million families across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean spend at least 40

per cent of their non-food household expenses for the entire year just on maternal health services, according to UNICEF.

Approximately 1.9 million of these families are in Africa, while around three million are in Asia. Compared with most rich countries, where a skilled birth attendant is present at almost all deliveries, the tally drops significantly in least developed countries, the UNICEF research shows.

These States include Somalia (9.4 per cent) and South Sudan (19.4 per cent), along with Madagascar (44.3 per cent), Papua New Guinea (53 per cent), Afghanistan (58.8 per cent) and Myanmar (60.2 per cent), based on 2013-2018 data.

Within countries, the gap is also stark between those who can afford help and those that cannot. In South Asia, for example, three times as many wealthy women receive four or more antenatal care visits than women from poorer families.

When it comes to women giving birth at a facility, the gap between the poorest and the richest women is more than double in West and Central Africa, according to UNICEF.

‘Wide gaps’ persist

“Although global coverage of skilled birth attendance has shown impressive gains in recent years, wide gaps in coverage across countries persist,” it said in a statement.

According to UNICEF’s analysis, from 2010 to 2017, health personnel increased in many countries. However, this increase was “minimal” in the world’s developing countries, where maternal and neonatal mortality levels have been highest.

For example, from 2010 to 2017, coverage increased from four to five health workers per 10,000 people in Mozambique, and from three to nine in Ethiopia. In contrast, Norway saw that number increase from 213 to 228 health personnel over the same period.

“Doctors, nurses and midwives play a critical role in saving mothers, yet millions of births occur every year without a skilled attendant,” UNICEF said. Focusing on uneven access to emergency care across the world, the UN agency underscored the lifesaving value of a caesarean section, or C-section.

Globally, around 30 million C-sections were carried out in 2015 – almost double the number in 2000, but their prevalence in Latin America and the Caribbean – in 44 per cent of all births in 2015 – was more than 10 times higher than in West and Central Africa.

“This low percentage of C-sections in West and Central Africa is alarming, suggesting a dire lack of access to this potentially lifesaving intervention,” UNICEF warned. Globally, the report also notes that pregnancy-related complications are the number one cause of death among girls between

15 and 19 years old.

Child brides at greater risk

This is partly because adolescent girls are still growing and are at great risk of complications if they become pregnant. Yet the report finds that child brides are less likely to receive proper medical care while pregnant or to deliver in a health facility, compared to women who married as adults.

In Cameroon, Chad and the Gambia, more than 60 per cent of girls now aged 20-24 who married before turning 15 have three or more children, compared to less than 10 per cent of women at the same age who married as adults.

Despite its concerns, the UN agency maintains that overall, the number of women and girls who die each year from issues related to pregnancy and childbirth has dropped more than 40 per cent in the past 20 years, from 532,000 in 1990, to 303,000 in 2015.

The UN agency also expressed hope that the inclusion of a skilled healthworker in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2030 Agenda would spur efforts to reach universal health coverage and reduce maternal and newborn deaths.

In an effort to protect the world’s newborns, UNICEF’s Every Child ALIVE campaign calls for greater investment in health systems, recruitment and training of doctors, nurses and midwives; clean and functional health facilities with water, soap and electricity for every mother and baby, life-saving drugs and equipment during delivery, and for the empowering of adolescent girls and families to demand quality care.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

As women comprise a significant percentage of the travel & tourism workforce, the challenge of healthcare costs should be of great concern, especially at the lower income levels. Yet another opportunity for the growing number of women in management positions to take up issues of concern to them in advancing the SDG agenda.

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



SDG 3:

**Don't let smoking
steal life's
breathtaking
moments**



The World Health Organization (WHO) says that tobacco use claims about eight million lives a year. (file). Picture: WHO.



SDG 3: Don't let smoking steal life's breathtaking moments

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 30 May 2019 - Tobacco use continues to claim around eight million lives a year, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Wednesday, in a call for faster action from governments to tackle smoking and the “enormous” health, social, environmental and economic costs it entails.

Ahead of World No Tobacco Day, marked on Friday, 31 May, [WHO's](#) Dr Vinayak Prasad, acting Director, Department for the Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases, highlighted the damage that tobacco causes to the lungs of smokers and non-smokers alike.

He warned that 3.3 million tobacco-related deaths - more than 40 per cent of the total - come from lung diseases, such as cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and tuberculosis.

“We want to highlight the huge scale of tobacco-related lung diseases,” he told journalists in Geneva. “Out of that 3.3 (million), about half a million people are those who are exposed to second-hand smoke and die from it...Amongst children, less than five years old, 60,000 children die every year from second-hand smoke – these are all low respiratory-tract infections.”

In just a single lungful of tobacco smoke, WHO insists that the hundreds of toxins contained in it “begin damaging the lungs”. This is because when smoke is inhaled, the structures that sweep mucus and dirt out of our airways are paralysed, allowing poisons in tobacco smoke to make their way into the lungs more easily.

The result of this is reduced lung function and breathlessness, owing to swollen airways and a build-up of mucus, WHO says, adding that these initial symptoms “are just part of the damage” that tobacco does to the lungs.

Governments ‘lagging behind’ their commitments

Although the percentage of people using tobacco globally has declined in recent decades - from 27 per cent in 2000, to 20 per cent in 2016 – WHO insists that governments are “lagging behind” their commitments to reduce tobacco use by 30 per cent by 2025.

To counter this, the UN agency is calling for quicker implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), which provides practical advice on how to implement tobacco control measures covering all sectors of government.

The Convention highlights the need for greater public awareness strategies, such as creating smoke-free indoor public spaces, workplaces and public transport, along with banning tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, and significantly increasing taxes on tobacco products, which should be sold with graphic health warnings.

In parallel to these activities, WHO’s advice remains that it’s never too late to quit smoking, as lung function improves within two weeks of stopping.

“Quitting tobacco use has the potential to reverse some, but not all, of the damage done by tobacco smoke to the lungs,” WHO says. “Quitting as soon as possible is therefore essential to prevent the onset of chronic lung disease, which is potentially irreversible once it has developed.”

To help people who want to quit, WHO also recommends the implementation of a toll-free ‘quitline’ service which offers behavioural counselling to callers, helping to boost quit rates by as much as four per cent. Mobile phone-based support for people who want to quit has also proved successful, the UN agency maintains.

These include WHO’s “Be [He@lthy](#), Be Mobile” cessation programme – in association with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) – which offers personalized support through mobile text messaging.

“These programmes help tobacco users to quit and are efficient and cost-effective,” WHO says, noting that in India, the programme achieved a self-reported 19 per cent quit rate after four to six months, compared with a baseline population quit rate, of five per cent.

The programme has been implemented in Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, India, the Philippines and Tunisia, and can be rolled out elsewhere, WHO says.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

If smoking kills, why are cigarettes freely sold at duty-free outlets? And don’t forget alcohol. Both are major health hazards, but both generate profits for companies and tax revenues for governments. Think about it.



SDG 3:

**First World
Food Safety Day
highlights need to
take unsafe food off
our plates**



Pix: World Bank/Arne Hoel. The Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization are joining forces to assist countries to prevent, manage and respond to risks along the food supply chain. Pictured above is a marketplace in Kampala, Uganda.

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



SDG 3: First World Food Safety Day highlights need to take unsafe food off our plates

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 6 June 2019 - Unsafe food kills an estimated 420,000 people every year, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Thursday, just ahead of the first-ever UN World Food Safety Day. Children under-five are the most at risk, carrying 40 per cent of the foodborne disease burden, amounting to 125,000 deaths every year.

“These deaths are entirely preventable,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Unsafe food – contaminated by bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemical substances – also causes nearly one-in-ten people, or some 600 million, to fall ill globally each year.

“World Food Safety Day is a unique opportunity to raise awareness about the dangers of unsafe food with governments, producers, handlers and consumers”, he stated.

Just as food safety contributes to food security - human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, tourism and sustainable development - unsafe food hinders these resources by straining health care systems and harming national economies, tourism, trade and development.

In many low- and middle-income economies, unsafe food that has caused workers to suffer illness, disability and premature death, costs \$95 billion in productivity annually, [WHO](#) estimates.

Improving hygiene practices in the food and agricultural sectors helps to reduce the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance along the food chain and in the environment, the UN explained.

‘No food security without food safety’

The theme of this year’s first commemoration on Friday is that “food safety is everyone’s business”.

Cognizant of the urgent need to raise awareness, promote and facilitate actions for global food safety, the General Assembly decided to designate 7 June as World Food Safety Day.

The UN has designated [WHO](#) and the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) to lead efforts in promoting worldwide food safety.

Together they are joining forces to assist countries

in preventing, managing and responding to risks along the food supply chain by working with food producers, vendors, regulatory authorities and civil society – regardless of whether food is domestically produced or imported.

“Whether you are a farmer, farm supplier, food processor, transporter, marketer or consumer, food safety is your business,” said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva. “There is no food security without food safety”.

The UN agencies underline that safe, nutritious and sufficient food is a key to promoting health and ending hunger, which are two of the main aims of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

To make a sustained difference to food safety:

- Governments must ensure safe and nutritious food for all.
- Agriculture and food producers need to adopt good practices.
- Business operators must safely prepare,

transport and store food.

- Consumers need timely, clear and reliable information on nutritional- and disease-risks associated with their food choices.
- UN organizations, governments, regional bodies and the private sector must work together on food safety issues.

Safe food contributes to a healthy life and its production improves sustainability by enabling market access and productivity, which drives economic development and poverty alleviation, especially in rural areas.

Investing in consumer food safety education can potentially reduce foodborne disease and return savings of up to \$10 for each dollar invested, according to the UN agencies.

Worldwide activities for World Food Safety Day are aiming to inspire action to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne health risks.

“From farm to plate, we all have a role to play in making food safe”, concluded the [WHO](#) chief.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Contaminated food is yet another avoidable man-made problem. Whether it is chickens fattened by steroids or vegetables sprayed with pesticides, it all lands up in the supply chain and eventually in the human system. No wonders the health and wellness business does so well.



SDG 3:

**UN health agency
highlights lifestyle
choices that can
prevent onset of
dementia**



World Bank/Miso Lisanin. An elderly woman rides her bike in Croatia (13 February 2013). New World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines stress the value of regular exercise to prevent the onset of dementia.



SDG 3: UN health agency highlights lifestyle choices that can prevent onset of dementia

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 14 May 2019 - Key lifestyle choices such as getting regular exercise, not smoking or drinking too much, can reduce the risk of dementia and cognitive decline, the UN health agency said on Tuesday.

In recommendations to counter an expected tripling in the number of people with the degenerative condition in the next 30 years, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) guidelines are designed to help medical professionals and governments to develop national policies.

Today, around 50 million people globally suffer from dementia and there are nearly 10 million new cases every year.

“We need to do everything we can to reduce our risk of dementia,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. “The scientific evidence gathered for these guidelines confirm what we have suspected for some time: that what is good for our heart, is also good for our brain.”

According to WHO’s new guidelines, other lifestyle choices that people can make to reduce the risk of dementia include controlling their weight, eating healthily and maintaining healthy blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

Last year, WHO provided support to countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Qatar, Slovenia and Sri Lanka to develop a comprehensive, multi-sectoral public health response to dementia, it said

in a statement.

Reducing the risk of lifestyle choices linked to dementia is one of several areas of action included in WHO's Global action plan for the public health response to the illness.

Other areas include strengthening diagnosis, treatment and care, with a particular emphasis on online support for carers of people with dementia.

"Dementia carers are very often family members who need to make considerable adjustments to their family and professional lives to care for their loved ones," said Dr Dévora Kestel, Director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse at WHO. "This is why WHO created iSupport... an online training programme providing carers of people with dementia with advice on overall management of care, dealing with behaviour changes and how to look after their own health."

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Dementia is just one of many challenges that will emerge in ageing societies. And young people will pay the price in terms of both costs and productivity. In order to do that, young people will need jobs. Jobs will not be created by waging wars, destabilising economies and advancing robotics. It's all inter-related.



SDG 5:

**More women in
boardrooms can
boost profits by up
to 20%**



ILO/Crozet M. Winnie Kakunta is in charge of SME development at the Community Relations department for Barrick Lumwana Mining. The company has partnered with the Zambia Green Jobs Programme led by the ILO, to build housing with local and green materials for its employees. (14 November 2015)

5 GENDER
EQUALITY



SDG 5: More women in boardrooms can boost profits by up to 20%

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 22 May 2019
- Businesses perform better – sometimes by as much as 20 per cent – when they employ more women in top positions, UN labour experts said on Wednesday, warning nonetheless that most still pay lip-service to the idea of gender equality in the boardroom.

In a report covering 13,000 firms in 70 countries, the International Labour Organization (ILO) said that globally, around six in 10 agreed that gender diversity improved their business, with almost as many citing gains in creativity, innovation and reputation.

In terms of profits, almost three-quarters of companies that tracked gender diversity in management positions reported increases of between five and 20 per cent, while the majority saw 10 to 15 per cent growth.

In addition to higher profits, report author Jae-Hee Chang also underlined that having more women in the boardroom also led to more female managers at the entry, medium and senior level.

Despite these positive findings, less than a third of company boards globally have at least 30 per cent female participation – the “critical mass” where the positive effects on the bottom line of more women in senior management begin to

kick in, according to ILO. “What happens at the very top leadership does trickle down,” she said. “It does have an association and connection to business performance.”

“It’s clear there are still fewer women in those type of (senior) roles than in the workforce as a whole, and the higher you go in the chain of command in a company... the less likely you are to find a woman”, said Deborah France-Massin, Director of the ILO Bureau for Employers’ Activities.

At a national level, the UN report also found a correlation between more female employees and increased production, based on data from 186 countries from 1991-2017.

“We expected to see a positive correlation between gender diversity and business success, but these results are eye-opening”, Ms. France-Massin explained. “When you consider the efforts companies make in other areas to get just an extra two or three per cent in profits, the significance is clear: companies should look at gender balance as a bottom line issue, not just a human resource issue.”

Despite the “conscious and unconscious bias” today that prevents women from being

exposed to the full range of tasks in businesses that help to ensure career progression, there is some evidence that this discrimination is being addressed, Ms. France-Massin insisted.

This is in part owing to increased education levels that are gradually creating a larger number of talented girls everywhere, she said, before warning gender discrimination in the workplace was potentially a bigger problem than previously thought.

It “goes above and beyond the workplace,” she said. “Workplaces are a microcosm of the societies we are operating in and the culture we are born into. Companies can do so much, but it’s also about societal change and the role of women in society and the acceptance that as the workplace progresses, companies need talent to move forward, and some of those barriers that used to be there need breaking down even further.”

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

More women are rising up the chain of command and taking up influential positions. But it is equally important to see them fulfilling the hopes and expectations from this change of mind-set. There’s no use having more women CEOs if they make the same bad decisions and repeat the same mistakes as the men.



SDG 5:

**Are robots sexist?
UN report shows
gender bias in
talking digital tech**



World Bank/Charlotte Kesl. Two schoolgirls make use of classroom computers at San Jose, a rural secondary school in La Ceja del Tambo, Antioquia, Colombia.



SDG 5: Are robots sexist? UN report shows gender bias in talking digital tech

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 17 May 2019 - Why do most voice assistants have female names, and why do they have submissive personalities? The answer, says [a new report](#) released on Friday by UNESCO, the UN's Education, Science and Culture agency, is that there are hardly any women working in the technical teams that develop these services and other cutting-edge digital tools.

The publication, produced in collaboration with the Germany Government and the EQUALS Skills Coalition – an alliance of public and private sector partners which encourages the involvement of women and girls in scientific and digital technology sectors – is called “I’d Blush If I Could.”

The title is a reference to the standard answer given by the default female-voice of Apple’s digital assistant, Siri, in response to insults from users. Apart from Siri, other “female” voice assistants also express submissive traits, an expression of the gender bias built in to Artificial Intelligence (AI) products as a result of what [UNESCO](#) calls the “stark gender-imbalances in skills, education and the technology sector.”

Several recommendations are made in the study, including advice to stop making digital assistants female by default; programming them to discourage gender-based insults and abusive language; and developing the advanced technical skills of women and girls so they can steer the creation of new technologies alongside men.

Given the explosive growth of voice assistants, says the report, there is an urgent necessity to help more women and girls cultivate strong digital skills.

Bridging the digital gender gap is an issue for all countries

Today, women are extremely under-represented in teams developing AI tools: women make up only 12 percent of AI researchers, six percent of software developers, and are 13 times less likely to file ICT (information and communication technology) patents.

“Obedient and obliging machines that pretend to be women are entering our homes, cars and offices,”

says Saniye Gülser Corat, Director of Gender Equality at UNESCO. “Their hardwired subservience influences how people speak to female voices and models how women respond to requests and express themselves. To change course, we need to pay much closer attention to how, when and whether AI technologies are gendered and, crucially, who is gendering them.”

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

This is not the only grey area of concern about who is behind all this new technology dominating and changing lives. Many more questions abound. If answers were more readily available via transparent and accountable public domains and processes, the adoption of technology would be follow a more responsible and sustainable trajectory.



SDG 7:

**Philanthropy to
profit: Clean energy
changing the face of
East Africa**



Pix: UN habitat. School in the district of Namacurra, in Zambézia province, Mozambique.



SDG 7: Philanthropy to profit: Clean energy changing the face of East Africa

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 31 May 2019 -- Until recently, Namacurra district, in the Zambezia province of Mozambique, some 1,500 km from the capital Maputo, did not have any basic services – such as schools, health centres, or even energy – connecting the region to the electricity grid would be extremely time-consuming, and costly.

But a new UN-backed for the benefit of the thousands of people, relocated to the area following the devastating rains of 2015, and it could herald an improved outlook for other economically disadvantaged parts of Africa.

The United Nations human settlements programme, [UN-Habitat](#), and Portuguese energy company EDP, are constructing a solar energy system to supply 12 classrooms – which have been built to withstand 180 km per hour winds – with clean, renewable energy.

This will have a huge impact on the community because, as well as enabling some 1,300 students to study at night, people living in the area will, for a small fee, be able to charge their mobile phones, and access the internet.

They will also stand a better chance of surviving, when the next cyclones and floods hit the country: Mozambique has developed an early-

warning system, with SMS alerts sent out by the government, but this only works in communities with access to energy.

“As long as you can provide this service at a school, people will at least have access to communication with the outside world, which is the main handicap when an emergency strikes, recounts Juan Hurtato Martinez, UN-Habitat architect and manager of the project. “So, it ensures that, in an emergency, they can receive the alarms quickly.”

Scaling up across east Africa

Although the impetus for the project comes from EDPs philanthropic arm, the company sees it as a sensible investment in Africa, in line with the UN’s call for companies to play their part in the move to a “green economy,” that is not reliant on fossil fuels such as coal and gas.

“The African continent is surely the continent with more natural resources – such as the sun, wind, water, biomass and others – that allow the use of renewable energies,” says Guilherme Collares Pereira, Director of International Relations at EDP. “Therefore, it makes total sense to intervene in the market that has resources and that has the needs.”



EDP - ENERGIAS DE PORTUGAL SA. Solar panels similar to those being installed by EDP and UN-Habitat in East Africa

Some 600 million people in Africa are without access to electricity, Pereira points out, and it is “more than proven that renewable energies can enable, in a cheaper, faster and more efficient way, universal energy access to be achieved.”

The project in the district of Namacurra is one of six, in Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi, that will be receiving support from EDP. At the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, which hosts more than 186,000 people, a mini-grid will supply pay-as-you-go electricity to refugees according to their consumption needs. “It is a very interesting approach that can be replicated throughout the camp,” says Pereira, “but it can also be replicated in other refugee camps, not only in the Horn of Africa but all over the world.”

Sustainability as a business opportunity

For EDP, the 2030 Agenda is an opportunity, says Pereira. “Ten years ago, when we began

involvement with these projects, we were guided more by our corporate responsibility policy, but nowadays it is more about business.”

In 2018 the company decided to invest €12 million in companies that are already working with renewable energy in East Africa. “At the moment, they are not as profitable as traditional EDP businesses,” he notes, “but this is a journey, and we are discovering how the process develops. So, in the next couple of years, when we are ready, we can invest in more companies and grow them in preparation for entry into other markets.”

“The potential is enormous: renewable energy technology is getting better, more efficient and more resilient. There is also an abundance of mechanisms and even financing from countries and the international community to support these projects. Everything is in place for its growth and it is imperative that the private sector enters this market.”

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

In the bygone days, people lived quite well without air-conditioners, refrigerators and water-heaters. In many parts of the world, they still do. City slickers today seek out this way of life in order to go “Back to Nature.” Renewable energies can certainly make a huge difference, but many other even more simple solutions exist.

8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



SDG 8:

**Young New Yorkers
bring robots,
and a glimpse of
the future, to UN
Headquarters**



UN News/Paulina Greer. Young students from a robotics team showcase robots at a technology event at the UN. (12 June 2019)



SDG 8: Young New Yorkers bring robots, and a glimpse of the future, to UN Headquarters

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 12 June 2019 - Tiny balls moved along a series of automated Lego robots, as young students from New York explained to United Nations staff the inner-workings of simple motors and engineering.

In the room next door, UN communications technology staff were briefing the other half of the student group on some of the more advanced developments that are leading the way in the Fourth Industrial Revolution - recognition and other emerging technologies.

On the table was a supply chain of robots, some with red claws made of tiny triangles lifting the balls to a platform, others sliding up a conveyer belt. Occasionally, a white or orange ball the size of a quarter-dollar would bounce off and land at the students' feet.

Camryn is one of the 18 students from Queens, New York, who visited the UN to showcase the robots on Wednesday, as part of a demonstration into how essential all technology is, to reaching the ambitious 2030 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

She pointed out the simple motor and bridge and spoke about how much she enjoyed the engineering experience, although she's not ready yet to commit to this field in the future.

Heading into orbit, to save the planet

"I don't know. I'm only 11", she said, proudly pointing out a robot that moves without wheels

on giant spindles – a creation built around this year’s theme, “Into Orbit”. This extra-terrestrial leap of imagination makes students picture an uninhabitable planet that needs time to heal itself, sending all its inhabitants into space.

Camryn is part of an after-school program, volunteering three hours per day at least three times per week, to build and then showcase the creations in First Lego League competitions, following a two-month research period. The program teaches students about physics, maths and science, as well as improving their communications skills and abilities to work in teams.

“I love the programme. It also teaches independence and time management,” said Camryn’s mother, who is one of numerous chaperones for the UN visit and helps to support the after-school program.

There are ten girls on the team, one as young as nine, with students attending fourth to eighth grade.

Motivating the students is easy says the coach and science teacher, Francis ‘Mr. B’Belizario: “They hear the word Lego. They hear the word robotics.”

He said reaching out to girls is important and while students in fourth and fifth grade still see equality between the genders, that changes when you go up in age.

“There’s no excuses now for the inequality. It used to be that things were manual. It’s all machines now. Programming involves brains”, Mr. B said. “They need to believe in themselves. Prove the critics wrong. You can do all this at home.”

While the “Jaguars” were showcasing their robots, the “Wolves” were hearing from two staff at the UN Emerging Technologies section of the Office of Information and Communication Technology (OICT).

Referencing the five robots or modules that make up the giant obstacle course for balls, he talked about new technology that uses up to six satellites in orbit to track the temperature, pressure and humidity of goods such as vaccines that, like the balls, move through a supply chain.

“Imagine that one of those balls is chocolate. You don’t want it to be too hot because it would melt,” he explained, pointing to how the little box on the table works in the real world.

“Is that a breadboard that hold the sensors?”, asked one of the students, sparking a conversation that would last until lunchtime.

The students would later get a tour of the United Nations and be back in school across the river in Queens, for the afternoon bell. For most, it was their first time visiting Headquarters. When asked what the UN does, one student replied that “diplomats from around the world meet here and discuss things.”

Those things include how people will survive in the future rolled into 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which include gender equality and sustainable development.

“Robots are usually not discussed here,” our UN News reporter told the students.

“They should be. It’s how we will survive,” was the reply.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Robotics are the new “toys” and may have enormous value in some areas for some industrial sectors. But their implications have not been adequately considered in travel & tourism, which has always claimed to be a human and personal industry. That’s not unexpected. As usual, the “side-effects” will emerge later.



SDG 8:

**Future of work
'with social justice
for all' tops agenda
of centenary UN
Labour conference**



Pix: ILO/Marcel Crozet. The Italian President Sergio Mattarella addresses the 108th International Labour Conference in Geneva on 10 June 2019.



SDG 8: Future of work ‘with social justice for all’ tops agenda of centenary UN Labour conference

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 10 June 2019 - The Centenary International Labour Conference got underway on Monday at the UN in Geneva, with ILO chief Guy Ryder, calling on hundreds of delegates from around the world to help “construct a future of work, with social justice for all”.

The Director-General of the International Labour Organization said that with the possible adoption of a landmark declaration looking to the future, at a time of transformative change, it was time “to tell the world that we have the confidence, the common purpose, the will and the means”, to continue making social justice a top priority.

“We will do so because labour is not a commodity. We will do so, because labour conditions with injustice, hardship and privation, imperil the peace of the world”, he told the more than 5,000 delegates and dozens of world leaders in attendance.

Although this is the 108th International Labour Conference, often dubbed the ‘world parliament’ of the labour movement, it comes in the [ILO’s centenary year](#).

“The defining challenge of this conference comes from the fact that the ILO’s Centenary coincides with the most profound and transformative process of the change in the world of work that it has ever seen,” said Mr. Ryder.

“There is nothing in these changes which questions the relevance of the ILO’s mandate or detracts from its importance. If anything, the reverse is true,” he added.

In a meeting at UN Headquarters in New York to mark the event in April, [UN chief](#) António Guterres noted that the ILO had played “a central role in the struggle for social progress”, throughout its history, as the oldest family member of the entire UN system.

Since the digital economy operates in a world without border, he stressed that “more than ever”, international institutions overall “must play a vital role in shaping the future of work we want”.

Mr Ryder said that a declaration focussed on social justice going forward was necessary because “freedom of association and expression are essential to sustained progress.”

“We will do this together because poverty anywhere is a danger to prosperity everywhere”, added the ILO chief, “and we will do it because the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of work obstructs other nations which wish to do so.”

UN General Assembly President hails value of decent work

The President of the UN General Assembly, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, also addressed the opening ceremony in Geneva, quoting the words

of the first Director-General Albert Thomas, who described the ILO as a “monument to peace and social justice”.

Acknowledging the ILO’s relevance to multilateralism, she reiterated the importance of decent work for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and for addressing challenges such as child labour, forced labour and modern slavery.

She added that decent work and gender equality are crucial steps to eradicate poverty and to reduce inequalities within and among countries.

Approximately, two billion people depend on the informal economy to survive, and 780 million workers are living in poverty. According to ILO, in 2016, the world had 24.9 million in forced labour. Out of this total, 16 million people were exploited in the private sector such as domestic work, construction or agriculture. The agency also notes that women and girls are disproportionately affected by forced labour.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

“Labour conditions with injustice, hardship and privation, imperil the peace of the world,” says the ILO chief. This will get worse as robotics gain ground. If two billion people depend on the informal economy to survive, and 780 million workers are living in poverty, clearly something is still seriously wrong.



SDG 8:

**More funding
needed to tackle
child labour in
agriculture**



© UNICEF/Khoy Bona. A four-year-old girl in Cambodia works in a field collecting water mimosa. (file 2017)



SDG 8: More funding needed to tackle child labour in agriculture

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 12 June 2019 - The number of children working in agriculture has increased by 10 million since 2012, which is why on Wednesday's World Day Against Child Labour, the UN agency for the sector is urging countries to allocate more funding to address a global surge in subsistence farming at every level.

"It is time we go beyond the exclusive focus on selected global supply chains and begin investing resources into tackling child labor in all situations", said Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) José Graziano da Silva in a video message, adding it was "essential to engage the agricultural workers and producer organizations."

Child labour is defined as work that is inappropriate for a child's age, prevents compulsory education, or is likely to harm their health, safety or moral development.

The FAO chief pointed out that not all participation by children in agriculture is considered child labour. For example, girls and boys learning how to grow vegetables or feed chickens on the family farm, can sharpen their skills and improve future livelihoods.

"However, when children work many hours daily, when they do heavy work, when they carry out tasks that are dangerous or inappropriate for their age, when this impedes their education, this is child labour, and needs to be eliminated," he stressed.

"Household poverty remains a common cause of child labour in agriculture", Mr. da Silva said. "In this context, social protection programmes and school feeding initiatives that link with family farmers are proven to be good antidotes against child labour".

Conference moves to end the practice

FAO, the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)) and the European Union (EU) organized a special conference in Brussels to mark the World Day.



Children sell food at a market in the town of Korhogo, in the north-west of Côte d'Ivoire. (file 2017), by © UNICEF/Frank Dejongh

With an estimated 152 million child labourers worldwide, more than half of whom are being exploited in the most extreme forms, Africa has the most with 72 million, followed by Asia with 62 million. Around 71 per cent of child labourers work in the agriculture sector, amounting to more than 108 million boys and girls, making it the focus for the conference overall, and the conference will formulate short- and long-term action plans to end exploitation in the sector.

Attendees, including national representatives, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and fair-trade organizations, are reflecting on progress and best practices for tackling child labour as well as the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Stepping-up efforts

The world will not be able to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) by 2030, if child labourers in the agriculture sector are simply left behind, according to FAO.



Children in Nepal sell flowers in a Durbar Square, Kathmandu., by UN News/Éric Ganz

“To make progress towards Zero Child Labour (SDG 8.7) the international community needs to reach scale”, which requires more investments, said FAO Assistant Director-General for Economic and Social Development Maximo Torero Cullen.

He highlighted that a cross-sectoral approach focusing on agriculture, rural development and poverty reduction would help alleviate the child labour scourge.

“Each of these sectors and work areas have concrete potential to substantially contribute to the progress towards ending child labour, which are largely untapped”, concluded Mr. Torero.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Contrast this against the growth in robotics. It may be far better to make robots take over the tasks being done by children, and put the children where they belong – in school.



SDG 8:

**New Disability
Inclusion Strategy
is ‘transformative
change we need’**



UNMISS/Isaac Billy. Athletes with disabilities play wheelchair basketball in South Sudan. (file 2012)



SDG 8: New Disability Inclusion Strategy is ‘transformative change we need’

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 11 June 2019 - Disability inclusion is not only a fundamental human right, it is “central to the promise” of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, UN Secretary-General António Guterres told the annual conference on the Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which began on Tuesday.

“When we fight to secure those rights, we move our world closer to upholding the core values and principles of the United Nations Charter”, he explained. “When we remove policies or biases or obstacles to opportunity for persons with disabilities, the whole world benefits”.

To this end, the UN chief said he was launching a new UN Disability Inclusion Strategy on Tuesday, “to raise the standards of the UN’s performance on disability inclusion across the board, and action to bring about the unified and transformative change we need”.

With an accountability framework to monitor progress and address challenges, the new strategy has clear benchmarks, and will encourage more persons with disabilities to work in, and be better supported by, the UN.

“I want the United Nations to be an employer of choice for persons with disabilities”, he stressed. “I want the United Nations to be fully accessible for one and all”.

According to Mr. Guterres: “We can no longer be a platform for change when persons with disabilities cannot access that platform, to speak”.

“Realizing the rights of persons with disabilities is a matter of justice as well as a common-sense investment in our common future”, the UN chief said, but “we have a long way to go in changing mindsets, laws and policies to ensure these rights”.

He urged participants to make the goals and the objectives of the Convention “a reality on the ground”.

Mr. Guterres cited last year’s first-ever UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development, which highlights core challenges, including disproportionate levels of poverty, lack of access to education, health services, employment and the under-representation of persons with disabilities in decision-making and political

participation.

“We must do much more to address discrimination and exclusion, particularly against girls and women with disabilities”, he underscored. “We must also do much more on transportation, infrastructure and information and communications technology to make our cities, rural areas, and societies inclusive”.

“Together, we can raise awareness and remove barriers”, he maintained. “Together, with persons with disabilities as agents of change, we can build an inclusive, accessible and sustainable world”.

“My hope,” he concluded, “is that people with disabilities – particularly women and girls – one day live in a world that protects, respects and values us.”

‘Greater visibility’

Addressing delegates in the General Assembly Hall, Catalina Devandas, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities said that despite multiple agendas and competing

priorities, “the rights of people with disabilities cannot be marginalized”.

She lauded the new UN Disability Inclusion Strategy to ensure that “people with disabilities are included in all development, human rights and humanitarian aid efforts”.

While calling it “an ambitious and far-reaching proposal that can mean a turning point for the inclusion of people with disability” in all pillars of the UN’s work, she warned that the strategy is “just the starting point of a long process”.

The UN expert called for the Member States to politically and financially support the strategy, flagging it as “a good investment” in strengthening the UN’s capacity to provide “better and greater support to national efforts to realize the rights of people with disabilities.”

“Social gains are only achieved when people fight for them”, she concluded. “It is this tireless fight that now allows people with disabilities to enjoy greater visibility on the international agenda”.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

How many people with disabilities are employed by the travel & tourism industry? I would love to get some statistics. PwDs are almost always at the lower rung of the ladder in terms of income and opportunities. Their chances of finding jobs will drop even further as a result of robotics.



SDG 9:

**UN makes
'Declaration
of Digital
Interdependence',
with release of tech
report**



UN Photo/Mark Garten. Melinda Gates, Co-Chair of The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (c), Jack Ma, Executive Chairman of Alibaba Group (l) and the UN Secretary-General António Guterres (r) discuss how digital cooperation and technology can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.v



SDG 9: UN makes ‘Declaration of Digital Interdependence’, with release of tech report

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 10 June 2019 - The digital future must be safer and more inclusive, says a new [tech report](#), “the Age of Digital Interdependence”, released on Monday by the UN [High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation](#), almost a year after the Panel was launched by Secretary-General António Guterres.

The launch included a “declaration of digital interdependence” on the part of the study’s authors, which describes humanity as being “in the foothills” of the digital age. It also lays out the risks faced by mankind, such as exploitative behaviour by private companies, a failure to realize human potential, and the stifling of necessary regulation.

The declaration outlines the Panel’s belief that cooperation in the digital space is paramount, as individuals, institutions, corporations and governments cannot manage digital developments alone, and that global aspirations and vulnerabilities are “deeply interconnected and interdependent”.

The report explores the ways that digital technology can help achieve the UN’s [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#); how digital tech relates to human rights and security; and models for digital cooperation between different parts of society. Several recommendations are contained within the report, based on the three main areas.

Inclusivity, trust and cooperation in the digital future

At a time when around half the world’s population still has no access to the Internet, the panel calls for every adult to have affordable access to digital networks, as well as digitally-enabled financial and health services, by 2030.

Women and marginalized groups must be supported, says the Panel, with specific policies adopted to ensure their full “digital inclusion”, and internationally recognized ways to measure inclusiveness must be established.

In order to protect human rights, the report recommends that the Secretary-General should conduct a global review of the ways in which human rights norms apply to digital technology, and calls on social media companies to cooperate fully in responding to human rights concerns.

Trust issues should be addressed with a “Global Commitment on Digital Trust and Security”, and new forms of global cooperation should be developed by the UN Secretary-General, said the Panel, based on the report recommendations.

Women must have ‘a seat at the table’

The launch of the report was marked with a live Webchat, featuring Mr. Guterres, Jack Ma, Executive Chairman of the Chinese conglomerate Alibaba Group, and Melinda Gates, co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

For Jack Ma, digital technology is helping to make globalization more inclusive. Giving the example of his own digital company, Alibaba, Mr. Ma said that of the 10 million small businesses selling products via his online platforms, 50 per cent of the most effective “power sellers”, are women. Mr. Ma claimed that most of the fears surrounding the internet come from the more developed economies which want to “hold on to yesterday”, whilst in China, and African countries, young people are less afraid of the future.

Melinda Gates insisted that women must have a “seat at the table, as the creators of society”, pointing out that women entrepreneurs currently receive just 6% of venture capital funding for digital start-ups. Regarding fears over inadequate internet governance, Ms. Gates acknowledged that this is a legitimate concern, but noted that the technology sector is coming together to self-govern and collaborate. Smart regulation, however, is also necessary to solve problems.

Mr. Guterres recalled that the growth of the internet began with a “naïve optimism”, but inequalities have actually grown. He called for digital technology to be used for a “quantum leap” in global development, and for everyone to have access to the internet. Without a huge commitment and investment in digital inclusion, he said, conflicts and mistrusts will grow.

‘The longer we wait, the further we will fall behind’: UN chief

The Secretary-General also spoke at an informal meeting of the General Assembly at UN Headquarters on Monday, at which he urged Member States to closely study the report, and expressed his hopes that it will stimulate an “urgent and open debate between governments, the private sector, civil society and others on how we move forward together safely in the age of digital interdependence”.

The United Nations itself, as the “multilateral system of the digital age”, said the UN Chief, is “unprepared and needs to catch up”, he said, adding that, every day, he sees ways that digital tech can help the UN to achieve its mission of peace, human rights and sustainable development.

However, he also sees daily examples of the disruption that digital technology can cause and the threats it can bring to that mission. “The international community is failing to meet its responsibilities. The systems for governance of digital technology are old, fragmented and reactive. The longer we wait to update these systems, the further we will fall behind.”

The 20-strong High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation is co-chaired by Jack Ma and Melinda Gates, with members drawn from a diverse group of independent experts, including US internet pioneer Vint

Cerf, and South Korea-based digital marketing mastermind Sophie Eom. The Panel was created to fulfil the UN chief's wish to include input from industry and the private sector, as well as governments, academia, civil society and inter-governmental organizations, in tackling the challenges of the digital age.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Indeed, technology has many bright sides, but the report also mentions “exploitative behaviour by private companies, a failure to realize human potential, and the stifling of necessary regulation.” Which is precisely why the UN Secretary General feels it necessary to stimulate an “urgent and open debate between governments, the private sector, civil society and others on how we move forward together safely in the age of digital interdependence.” No such debate is taking place in travel technobabble forums which are dominated by the usual brand-name mega-corporations as speakers and sponsors, resulting in the same boring messages.



SDG 11:

**AI summit focuses
on fighting hunger,
climate crisis and
transition to 'smart
sustainable cities'**

Accelerating progress
towards the SDGs



ITU Twitter. The third annual AI for Good Global Summit discusses the role of artificial intelligence (AI), including in advancing education, healthcare, social and economic equality and space research, Geneva, Switzerland.



SDG 11: AI summit focuses on fighting hunger, climate crisis and transition to ‘smart sustainable cities’

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 28 May 2019 - Artificial intelligence, or AI, is at the forefront of fighting hunger, mitigating the climate crisis and facilitating “the transition to smart sustainable cities”, said the chief of the UN agency which specializes in information and communication technologies, Houlin Zhao, kicking off the third AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva.

“This summit is the leading United Nations platform for dialogue on artificial intelligence”, explained the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on Tuesday, adding that it “also raises complex questions about privacy and trust and poses other challenges, from job displacement and potential bias in algorithms, to autonomous weapons and social manipulation”.

More than 2,000 participants from over 120 countries joined AI leaders and humanitarian actors to highlight its potential for advancing education, healthcare and wellbeing, social and economic equality and space research.

Unable to attend in person, Secretary-General António Guterres sent a message lauding “the promise” of AI while also warning against its potential dangers.

“If we are to harness the benefits of artificial intelligence and address the risks, we must all work together – Governments, industry, academia and civil society – to develop the frameworks and systems that enable responsible innovation”, he said. “These systems must be nimble and adaptable, capable of developing norms and self-regulation standards alongside legally binding laws and instruments when needed, as in the case of lethal autonomous weapons”.

Noting that the UN is “well placed” as a forum on “how best to guide progress to better serve humanity,” Mr. Guterres underscored that “we must seize the moment, in partnership, to deliver on the promise of technological advances and harness them for the common good”.

In his opening address, Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) spelled out that climate change is accentuating the need for tailored information to improve resilience to extreme weather events.

“WMO deals with big data every day, running a 24/7 operational prediction system based on a huge amount of data gathered around the world,” he said, identifying AI as a potentially valuable tool to help meet this challenge.



The third annual AI for Good Global Summit officially kicked off on Tuesday with important discussions and examples of artificial intelligence (AI) in action, including robotics., by ITU Twitter

Guided by its inter-disciplinary audience, this year's summit aims to generate 'AI for Good' projects and ensure that associated technologies will be developed safely, allowing equal access for all.

Francis Gurry, Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) said that 340,000 AI patent applications have been filed since the 1950s: "Artificial intelligence is one of the most important of the technologies that are currently transforming our economy and society."

He acknowledged there were pressing economic, social and ethical questions surrounding AI, saying that "we are at an extremely early stage, but the common characteristic is that the underlying technological activity...is occurring at a much more rapid speed than our capacity to formulate" responses.

Organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) - in partnership with the XPRIZE Foundation, the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and 37 UN entities - the summit, which will run from 28-31 May, aims to identify practical applications of AI to accelerate the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

"We need to ignite a bigger conversation centered around how to use AI and data to help find scalable solutions to the biggest challenges facing humanity," XPRIZE CEO Anousheh Ansari said.

It will also debate unintended consequences of the AI revolution, and propose actions for high-potential solutions in achieving global scale, along with a so-called "learning day" to offer an audience with leading AI experts and educators.

"By bringing together AI technologists with leaders in government, industry, and humanitarian initiatives, new ways to apply AI to pressing world challenges are imagined and realized," stressed Vicki L. Hanson, ACM CEO.

What is clear to ITU chief Zhao is that "no one nation, no one organization, no one company and no one community can meet these challenges alone".

"The path to a transformative but also a safe, trusted and inclusive AI will require unprecedented collaboration between government, industry, academia and civil society", he concluded.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

The summit will debate the "unintended consequences of the AI revolution." In fact, the onslaught of technology is having a lot "unintended consequences" across many sectors – from the loss of privacy to racial profiling and usage by governments to violate human rights. Travel technobabble pointedly do not put these "unintended consequences" on their agendas. It may drive away the sponsors.



SDG 11:

**‘Ground-breaking
innovation’
needed to make
cities livable and
sustainable**



UN Photo/Kibae Park. View of the city of Dhaka, Bangladesh. (file)



SDG 11: ‘Ground-breaking innovation’ needed to make cities livable and sustainable

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 29 May 2019 - If the battle to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to be won or lost in cities, then they need to “achieve a lasting impact on communities and to ensure that no one is left behind,” the head of the UN agency dealing with sustainable urban development said on Wednesday.

Opening the high-level session of the [first UN-Habitat Assembly](#) in Nairobi, Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlement Programme, [UN-Habitat](#), explained that innovation – which she defined as “new knowledge and solutions to improve living conditions for all in cities and communities” – is the central theme of the Assembly because cities, which drive national economies by “creating prosperity, enhancing social development and providing employment,” can also be breeding grounds for poverty, exclusion and environmental degradation.

Therefore, she said, cities “will have to continue to drive innovation in ground-breaking ways,” for the benefit of all, as envisaged in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the UN’s blueprint for ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring peace and prosperity for all.



UN-HABITAT. Prime Minister Josai Vorege Bainimarama (centre) of Fiji is greeted by UN-Habitat’s Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif (left) and Assembly President Martha Delgado on arrival for the Assembly Strategic Dialogue in Nairobi.

Innovative and smart solutions are part of the reasons that cities and regions grow prosperous, added Ms. Mohd Sharif, asking delegates to consider how to promote smart urban technologies that can handle the major systems a city requires - such as water, transport and clean energy - to improve the quality of life for all citizens; how countries should create an environment that encourages innovative solutions to poverty; and how best to make use of new knowledge to better serve communities.

UN-Habitat, said Ms. Mohd Sharif, plans to become a centre of excellence and innovation that “sets the global discourse and agenda on sustainable urban development,” which generates “innovative, specialized and cutting-edge knowledge.”

As an example of UN-Habitat’s willingness to engage with the latest innovations in order to engage with the latest threats faced by today’s diverse urban areas, such as climate change and growing inequality, the programme convened the first ever [Round Table on Sustainable Floating Cities](#), at UN Headquarters in New York in April.

Praising the work of UN-Habitat, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said that cities can no longer be built the way New York or Nairobi were built: new cities must be “built for people, not cars. And we must build cities knowing that they will be on the frontlines of climate-related risks — from rising sea levels to storms. Floating cities can be part of our new arsenal of tools.”

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Travel & tourism is a major contributor to urban growth. That’s not going to change under the current development model. Hotels, department stores, office buildings – they all create jobs, but they also add to congestion and pollution, especially if badly planned, as is the case in many Asian cities. If innovation is the over-arching requirement, travel & tourism can be a major part of the solution.



SDG 13:

Take action on air pollution to save lives, and the planet



WMO/Alfred Lee. Smog in Beijing



SDG 13: Take action on air pollution to save lives, and the planet

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 5 June 2019
- In a message to mark [World Environment Day](#), celebrated on Wednesday, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has emphasized the link between worsening levels of air pollution and the climate crisis.

As well as claiming seven million lives every year, and damaging children's development, the UN chief noted that many air pollutants cause global warming, which he has described as "an existential threat."

In his video address, the UN Secretary-General recalled his recent experience in the [South Pacific](#) island states, which he visited last month to show solidarity with those suffering from the worst effects of climate change. Mr. Guterres said that he had seen first-hand the severe and worsening impacts of the global climate emergency.

With the environment facing "unprecedented perils," caused by human activity, the UN chief said that action to fight climate change is "the battle of our lives", that we must win, by taxing pollution, ending fossil fuel subsidies, and halting the construction of new coal plants.

China makes 'significant strides' to tackle poor air quality

World Environment Day, widely celebrated in over 100 countries, is the United Nations day for encouraging international awareness and action to protect the environment. The theme for 2019 is air pollution, calling on governments, industry, communities and individuals to take action to explore renewable energy and green technologies, and improve the air quality in cities and regions across the world.

Every World Environment Day has a different host country: this year's host is China, with the official celebration taking place in the eastern city of Hangzhou, in the presence of senior Chinese government officials and Joyce Msuya, Acting Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, ([UNEP](#)).

Although the rapid development of many Chinese cities has led to poor air quality, and associated health problems for many citizens, the country has made [significant strides](#) in addressing the problem in recent years.

In the Chinese capital, Beijing, which has become almost synonymous with air pollution, the concentration of fine particulates (the tiny, deadly elements largely responsible for deaths and illnesses) in the air, has fallen by a third over the past two decades, beating the target set by the State Council, China's main administrative body.

Speaking to UN News ahead of World Environment Day, Tiy Chung, Communications Officer for the Climate & Clean Air Coalition at UNEP, said that Beijing is "showing the way," by taking the issue very seriously, and implementing strong policies. The city, he said, has taken a systematic approach based on good science, and coordinated successfully with surrounding cities and regions.

Looking at other cities and countries, Mr. Chung is hopeful that the world is moving in the right direction. "We are getting at a mix of good policies and technologies. Innovative low-emission technology is at the forefront of a new revolution driven by policies pushing for lower air pollution and de-carbonization of economy."

More information about the international events to mark World Environment Day can be found [here](#).

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

World Environment Day is robustly marked right across the travel & tourism industry annually. In reality, every day deserves to be World Environment Day. Every little bit helps. And no matter how much is done, it's never going to be enough.



SDG 13:

**Preserving
biodiversity vital
to reverse tide of
climate change**



Bioversity International/B. Sthapit. A saleswoman sells Asian grapefruits on a floating market.



SDG 13: Preserving biodiversity vital to reverse tide of climate change

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 22 May 2019 - The food people eat around the world is becoming “alarmingly homogenous” according to UN data, even though access to a wide variety of nutritious food has never been greater. That warning comes as the world marks the International Day for Biological Diversity on Wednesday, which this year highlights the impact of environmental neglect on food security and public health.

Biodiversity in plant and animal life in the world – in terms of species, habitats and genetics – leads to ecosystems that are healthier, more productive and better able to adapt to challenges like climate change, says the UN, and human activity is threatening the fate of species around the world like never before, according to [an alarming new UN report](#) earlier this month.

The theme “Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health” aims to leverage knowledge and spread awareness of how much all life depends on biodiversity.

In his [message](#) to mark the day, celebrated every 22 May, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, notes that “the quality of the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe all depend on keeping the natural world in good health”, also underlining that biodiversity was essential to achieve the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and to address climate change.

Healthy ecosystems can “provide 37 per cent of the mitigation needed to limit global temperature rise”, he said, warning that the “current negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystems are projected to undermine progress towards 80 per cent of the targets for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We cannot allow this to happen.”

“The world’s current food system is increasingly broken. Billions of people lack access to proper nutrition”, said the UN chief. “Approximately one third of what is produced is lost or wasted. The ways in which we grow, process, transport, consume and waste food are leading causes of biodiversity loss, while also contributing to climate change.”

Addressing the issue of deforestation, Mr. Guterres said it had caused the “loss of more than 290 million hectares of forests that help to absorb harmful carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere”.

Mr. Guterres urged all governments, businesses and civil society to “take urgent action to protect and sustainably manage the fragile and vital web of life on our one and only planet”.

Highlighting the galvanizing effect of biodiversity for human health and well-being, the Secretary-General stressed that “solutions exist”.

“By halting environmentally harmful practices, diversifying our food systems and promoting more sustainable production and consumption patterns, we can improve global health, increase food security and strengthen resilience to climate change”, he concluded.

How can you help?

By choosing to eat only seasonal and local produce, we can ensure that the demand for the right foods is high in the right season.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), more than 90 per cent of traditional crops have disappeared from farmers’ fields, while half of the animals bred by humans have been lost. All of the world’s 17 main fishing grounds are being fished at or above their sustainable limits.

FAO also [underlines](#) that agricultural biodiversity is fundamental for coping with a changing climate, and helping to remove carbon from the atmosphere, and securing the future of diverse sources of healthy and nutritious food.

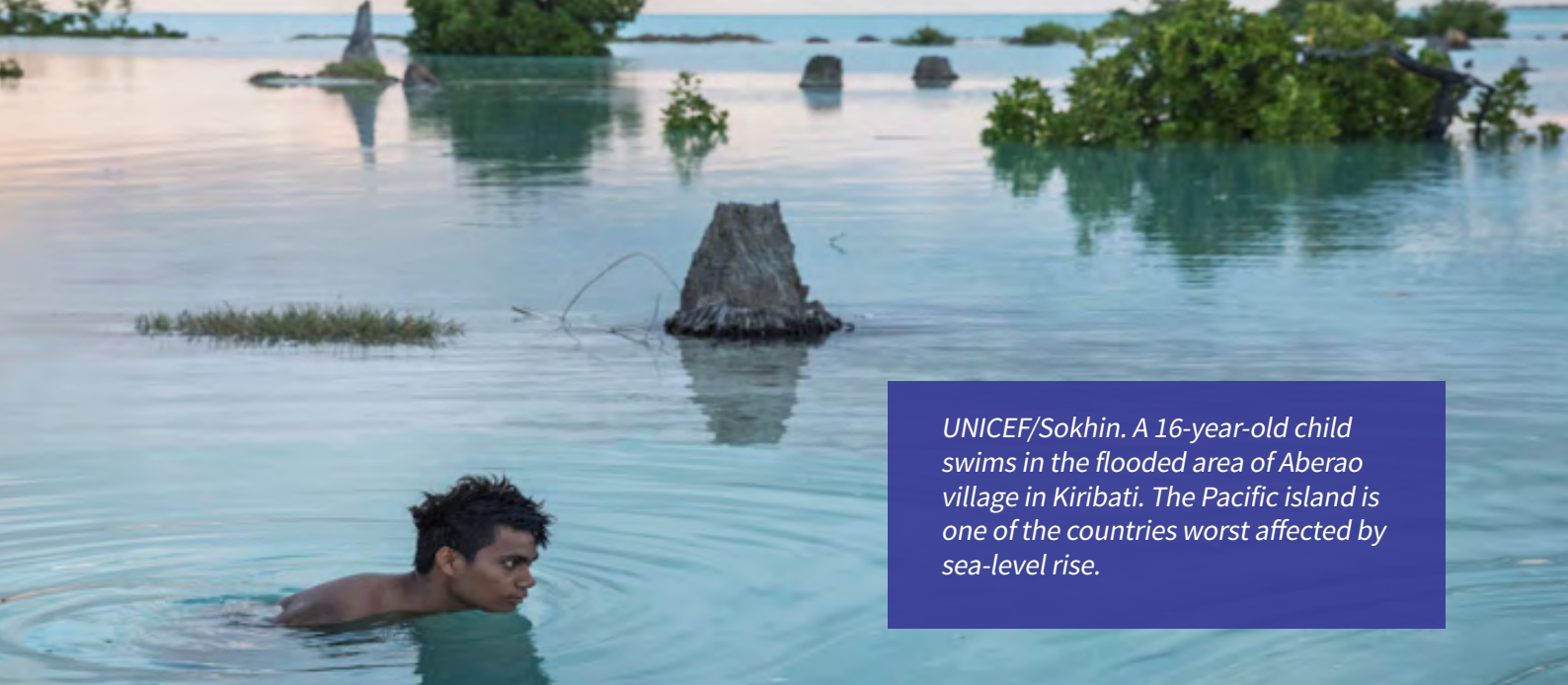
IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

The UN Secretary General says, “By halting environmentally harmful practices, diversifying our food systems and promoting more sustainable production and consumption patterns, we can improve global health, increase food security and strengthen resilience to climate change.” Sounds like a slogan well worth adopting at travel & tourism events.



SDG 13:

**UN chief visits
Tuvalu, island at the
front-line of climate
emergency**



UNICEF/Sokhin. A 16-year-old child swims in the flooded area of Aberao village in Kiribati. The Pacific island is one of the countries worst affected by sea-level rise.



SDG 13: UN chief visits Tuvalu, island at the front-line of climate emergency

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 29 May 2019 - Further inaction on climate change is “simply not an option”, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said on Wednesday in an [opinion piece](#) where he called for “rapid and deep change in how we do business, generate power, build cities and feed the world.”

If the world is to prevail against climate change, “then we must find the political will to take transformative measures,” declared the UN chief.

“Leaders must come to the UN summit in September armed with solutions as well as speeches”, he stressed, referring to the action-focused meeting he is convening in September

to mobilize political ambition on climate change and push forward the goals of the [Paris Agreement](#), which encompass greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance.

On his recent [Pacific tour](#) to the frontlines of the global climate emergency, he heard the rallying cry “Save Tuvalu; save the world,” while visiting the tiny island archipelago that is battling sea level rise and coastal erosion as warming temperatures threaten the region.

“I was there to show solidarity with those suffering the worst impacts of climate change and to draw attention to the innovative climate action underway in the region,” explained the UN chief.



UN Photo/Mark Garten | Secretary-General António Guterres on the Pacific Ocean island of Tuvalu. (17 May 2019)

Sea level rise in some Pacific countries is “four times greater than the global average”, he stated, saying that it poses “an existential threat to several island States”.

“Oceans are in serious trouble, from coral bleaching to biodiversity loss to plastic pollution”, he warned. “Extreme weather events are on the rise, jeopardizing lives and livelihoods”.

Mr. Guterres spelled out: “Nowhere have I seen the heartbreaking impacts of climate change more starkly than in Tuvalu, a remote coral atoll nation where the highest point is less than five metres above sea level.”

He recounted a visit to the home of a family “who live in a state of perpetual anxiety about inundation by the relentlessly rising seas just steps away”.

The UN chief was “deeply moved by the warmth of the Tuvaluan people and their intense devotion to their land, way of life and cultural heritage”, he said, adding that while these communities have contributed almost nothing to climate change, because of big emitters, “they are now fighting to preserve their country’s very existence”.



Pix: Lauren Day/World Bank | Building seawalls along the coastline in Tarawa, Kiribati, to protect against high tides or tsunamis.

The ‘whole planet’ at stake

“Make no mistake: it is not just Tuvalu, or small islands, or the Pacific at stake”, underscored the Secretary-General. “It is the whole planet”.

What is happening to these countries “is a sign of what is in store for the rest of us”, he warned.

“People all over the world are starting to feel the impacts of the climate emergency – and these will only worsen”.

The UN chief recalled meeting young children who “are already fearful for their future and are relying on my generation to secure it”.

“As Secretary-General of the UN, I have many battles”, he [said](#). “But as a grandfather, the struggle against climate change is the fight of my life”.

Noting that “we are not winning”, Mr. Guterres urged that political will must be found “to take transformative measures”.

“We must acknowledge the moral authority of the Pacific nations, frontrunners in the race against the climate emergency”, he stated. “And we must find sustainable solutions, invest in renewable energies and increase resilience and adaptation”.



Thomas Michael Perry/World Bank | Fishermen on Vanuatu’s Malekula Island launch their outrigger canoe.

Achieving ‘essential’ goals

The clearly laid-out goals of the scientific community to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and limit global warming to 1.5C by the end of the century, are “essential”, according to the UN chief.

As the global community pursues those goals, he restated his message to Governments to “shift taxes from salaries to carbon”, saying “we should [tax pollution](#), not people”.

He also urged them to “stop subsidizing fossil fuels” because “taxpayers’ money should not be

used to boost hurricanes, spread drought and heat waves, and melt glaciers”.

“Stop building new coal plants by 2020”, he continued. “We need a green economy, not a grey one”.

He stressed that we have the [tools](#) to tackle the climate crisis, to “save lives and property, breathe less polluted air, access cleaner water and protect biodiversity”.

“Climate action could also yield a direct economic gain of \$26 trillion, compared to business as usual, through to 2030, making it a cost-effective

option” argued the UN chief.

Turning to his climate action summit, Mr. Guterres [flagged](#) that he is asking world leaders to come “not just with speeches” but with “plans to transform energy, mobility, industry and agriculture”, and to implement their commitments to climate financing, “not out of generosity but enlightened self-interest”.

“Urgent climate action is a choice we can – and must – make”, concluded the Secretary-General. “As the people of Tuvalu know all too well: Saving them will save us all”.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Once upon a time, South Pacific islanders led relaxed, simple lives that made zero contribution to climate change. If they are being affected by all the mistakes of “globalisation” and “development”, for which they are not responsible, would they not be better off reverting to the ways of their ancestors rather than worrying about their listing on a scale of “Least Developed” or “Developing countries”. Perhaps they should be the ones teaching the so-called “Developed countries” how to live sustainable lives rather than the other way around.



SDG 13:

**On World Bee day,
human activity
blamed for falling
pollinator numbers**



FAO/Alessia Pierdomenico. A participant at World Bee Day, held at FAO headquarters in Rome to raise awareness on the role of bees and pollinators in food and agriculture, captures a photo of a bee observation hive. (20 May 2019)



SDG 13: On World Bee day, human activity blamed for falling pollinator numbers

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 20 May 2019 - If you think you're busy, then spare a thought for the world's bees; for they, along with other insects and animals, are responsible for pollinating more than 75 per cent of the planet's favourite food crops.

The problem is, pollinators are under threat, and their numbers are falling because of human impact. We are likely losing some species forever, [FAO](#) believes, based on available data in the U.S and Europe. It's a warning that the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization, FAO, highlighted on World Bee Day, which is observed on 20 May.

"It's really a culmination of factors kind of all coming together, all of which are driven by human activity," said FAO agriculture officer Abram Bicksler. "So climate change is a factor, habitat loss is a factor, the overuse of pesticides is a big factor, but also there are many diseases and pests that are affecting our pollinators and so when those are taken together, yes, pollinators are really facing a hard time."

According to FAO, the most popular pollinators are bees, and there are between 25,000 to 30,000 species.

The UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, gave the keynote address at UN Headquarters in New York, as part of a celebratory event marking the Day.

Wild bees are more prolific pollinators than the domestic species, owing to the fact that they have more fur for pollen particles to cling to when they go in search of it.

Without bees and other pollinators – butterflies, hummingbirds, bats and even monkeys, among others - FAO says that we wouldn't have coffee, apples, almonds, tomatoes and cocoa, among many other fruit and seed-producing crops.

In a call to protect bees and other pollinators, the FAO underscored their key role in keeping the planet healthy by conserving biodiversity - a cornerstone of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), and a key element in building resilience in farming ecosystems to climate change.

“World Bee Day presents an opportunity to recognize the role of beekeeping, bees and other pollinators in increasing food security, improving nutrition and fighting hunger, as well as in providing key ecosystem services for agriculture,” said FAO Director-General Jose Graziano da Silva.

In an appeal to members of the public to help tackle the threat to bees and other pollinators posed by invasive insects, pesticides, land-use change and monocropping practices – which may reduce available nutrients for bee colonies - FAO recommends planting a variety of bee-friendly flowers.

It also encourages people to create their very own insect hotel – a hollow-ended tree trunk or branch, for instance – which is an ideal shelter for insect pollinators.

“The big thing is promoting their habitat,” said FAO’s Mr. Bicksler. “You can also talk to your policy-makers and share about the importance of these in pollinators for food security, for reducing poverty, and also for the production the things you love, like beeswax and honey.”

Celebrated for the first time in 2018, the date chosen for World Bee Day – 20 May - is no accident; it was chosen to coincide with the birthday of Anton Janša, a pioneer of modern apiculture from Slovenia.

Mr. Janša came from a family of beekeepers in a country where beekeeping is an important agricultural activity with a long-standing tradition, FAO said in a press release.

The idea for World Bee Day was promoted by the Republic of Slovenia, with the support of Apimondia, the International Federation of Beekeepers’ Associations and FAO.

World Bee Day was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2017 and celebrated for the first time last year.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Travel & tourism trade shows have B2B networking sessions. How about a Bee-to-Bee networking session to learn how networking by the Bees contributes to the survival of mankind, and what buyers and sellers can learn from that far more superior agenda. In fact, B2B sessions are very much a part of the economic-driven “human activity” blamed for falling pollinator numbers. Maybe some Bee-to-Bee education may help put things into a broader perspective.



SDG 13:

**Paradise islands of
Pacific increasingly
vulnerable to
climate change**



UNDP Samoa. Children in a Samoan village gathered at a safe location during a disaster drill.



SDG 13: Paradise islands of Pacific increasingly vulnerable to climate change

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 10 May 2019 - A seeming paradise, life on the Pacific islands is threatened by climate change and extreme weather, frustrated by remoteness and a lack of educational and economic opportunities. Secretary-General António Guterres begins a visit to the region this weekend, where he will speak to people living on some of the islands and see for himself how the UN is helping to mitigate some of the biggest issues.

Simona Marinescu is the UN Resident Coordinator for the 28 islands that make up Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau.

Speaking to UN News ahead of the Secretary-General's visit, she described some of the issues facing the region, including how to get young people to gain more schooling and skills to get or start their own businesses on the islands – and how to make the islands more enticing for businesses. Ms. Marinescu [starts the interview](#) by describing a trip to Tokelau, whose farthest island is 50 hours away by boat from Samoa.

The greatest threat to the way of life in the Pacific is climate change. Ms. Marinescu said one of the main concerns for Governments in the region is keeping the balance between access to finance and tools for adapting to climate change, while also growing their economies. Many of the small island Pacific nations are developing, and once they “graduate” to middle-income, doors to financing mechanisms close.

“They are proud to graduate,” said Ms. Marinescu. “However, they still remain fragile. They remain exposed to climate change. So a big debate right now is how we can decouple graduation from access to major funding streams that help them build resilience.”

Samoa, for example, jumped from the Least Developed Country to Developing status in 2014. It also received \$65 million; one of the largest country allocations from the Green Climate Fund, for a six-year project on flood management – which means building seawalls and river walls to protect housing, and rethinking housing design.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Once upon a time, the South Pacific islanders led relaxed, simple lives that made zero contribution to climate change. If they are being affected by all the mistakes of “globalisation” and “development”, for which they are not responsible, would they not be better off reverting to the ways of their ancestors rather than worrying about their listing on a scale of “Least Developed” or “Developing countries”. Perhaps they should be the ones teaching the so-called “Developed countries” how to live sustainable lives rather than the other way around.



SDG 13:

**One million species
face extinction**



UNDP Ecuador. Splendid Leaf Frog, Ecuador. (19 January 2015)



SDG 13: One million species face extinction

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 6 May 2019 - A hard-hitting report into the impact of humans on nature shows that nearly one million species risk becoming extinct within decades, while current efforts to conserve the earth's resources will likely fail without radical action, UN biodiversity experts said on Monday.

Speaking in Paris at the launch of the [Global Assessment](#) study – the first such report since 2005 – [UNESCO](#) Director-General Audrey Azoulay said that its findings put the world “on notice”.

“Following the adoption of this historic report, no one will be able to claim that they did not know,” the head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization said. “We can no longer continue to destroy the diversity of life. This is our responsibility towards future generations.”

Highlighting the universal importance of biodiversity – the diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems – Ms. Azoulay said that protecting it “is as vital as fighting climate change”.

Presented to more than 130 government delegations for their approval at [UNESCO](#) headquarters, the report features the work of 400 experts from at least 50 countries, coordinated by the Bonn-based Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ([IPBES](#)).

In addition to providing exhaustive insights on the state of nature, ecosystems and how nature underpins all human activity, the study also discusses progress on key international goals, such as the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change.

The report also examines five main drivers of “unprecedented” biodiversity and ecosystem change over the past 50 years, identifying them as: changes in land and sea use; direct exploitation of organisms; climate change, pollution, and invasion of alien species.

One in four species at risk of extinction

On at-risk fauna and flora, the study asserts that human activities “threaten more species now than ever before” – a finding based on the fact that around 25 per cent of species in plant and animal groups are vulnerable.

This suggests that around one million species “already face extinction, many within decades, unless action is taken to reduce the intensity of drivers of biodiversity loss”.

Without such measures there will be a “further acceleration” in the global rate of species extinction, which is already “at least tens to hundreds of times higher, than it has averaged over the past 10 million years”, the report states.

It notes that despite many local efforts, including by indigenous peoples and local communities, by 2016, 559 of the 6,190 domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture were extinct – around nine per cent of the total - and at least 1,000 more are threatened.

Crop security threatened long-term

In addition, many crop wild relatives that are needed for long-term food security “lack effective protection”, the report insists, while the status of wild relatives of domesticated mammals and birds “is worsening”.

At the same time, reductions in the diversity of cultivated crops, crop wild relatives and domesticated breeds mean that farming will likely be less resilient against future climate change, pests and pathogens.

“While more food, energy and materials than ever before are now being supplied to people in most places, this is increasingly at the expense of nature’s ability to provide such contributions in the future,” the report states, before adding that “the biosphere, upon which humanity as a whole depends...is declining faster than at any time in human history”.

Marine pollution ‘has increased tenfold since 1980’

On the issue of pollution, although global trends are mixed, air, water and soil pollution have continued to increase in some areas, the report insists. “Marine plastic pollution in particular has increased tenfold since 1980, affecting at least 267 species”, it says, including 86 per cent of marine turtles, 44 per cent of seabirds and 43 per cent of marine mammals.

The 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is also the first of its kind to examine and include indigenous and local knowledge, issues and priorities, IPBES said in a statement, noting that its mission is to strengthen policy-making for the sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.

“The loss of species, ecosystems and genetic diversity is already a global and generational threat to human well-being,” insisted Sir Robert Watson, IPBES Chair. “Protecting the invaluable contributions of nature to people will be the defining challenge of decades to come. Policies, efforts and actions - at every level - will only succeed, however, when based on the best knowledge and evidence.

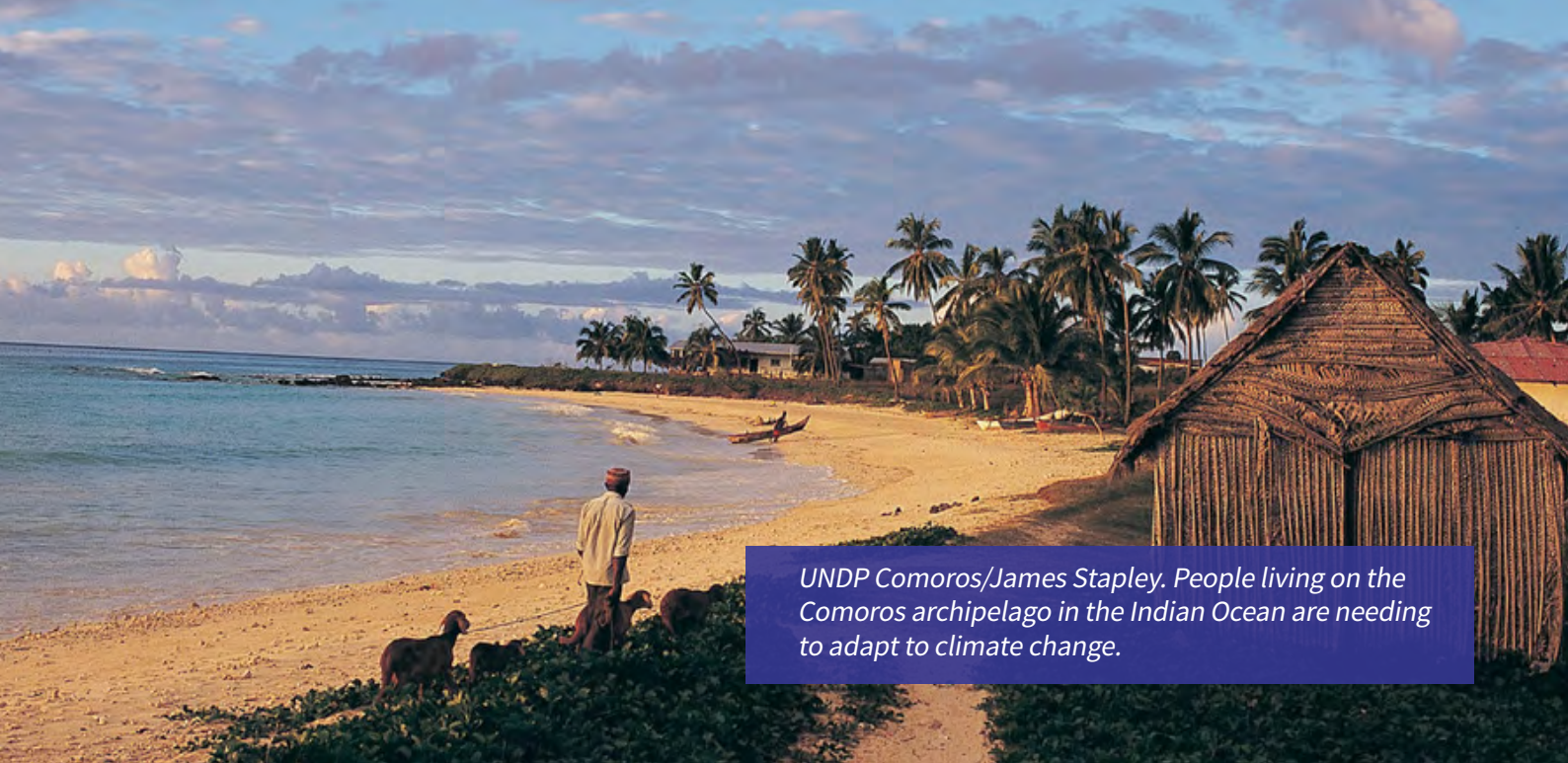
IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Ecotourism, responsible tourism and sustainable tourism are all buzzwords designed to be a part of the solution. Perhaps they are not doing as good a job as they should be. Statistically, it would be interesting for the ecotourism practitioners to actually measure their value.



SDG 13:

**‘A moral, ethical
and economic
imperative’ to slow
global warming**



UNDP Comoros/James Stapley. People living on the Comoros archipelago in the Indian Ocean are needing to adapt to climate change.



SDG 13: ‘A moral, ethical and economic imperative’ to slow global warming

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 9 May 2019 -- It is nothing less than a “moral, ethical and economic imperative” to take more action to mitigate the existential threat posed by climate change, [said top executives](#) from across the United Nations system on Thursday.

Calling on Member States to take “urgent action to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”, the leaders of more than 30 UN agencies and entities, issued a formal, joint appeal for governments everywhere to “step up ambition and take concrete action” ahead of the landmark [Climate Action Summit](#), which has been convened by UN chief António Guterres this September.

The appeal noted that to keep rising temperatures down, countries had to strive to “fulfil their obligations on human rights, including the right to health, the right to food security, the right to development, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women, intergenerational equity, and decent work and a just transition for all, as stated in the [Paris Agreement](#).”

As set out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [Special Report on Global Warming](#), limiting global warming to 1.5°C “is necessary to prevent irreversible changes. Achieving this goal will require changes on an unprecedented scale at all levels, but it is still possible if we act now”, said the UN system-wide appeal.

“With great urgency we call upon Member States to come to New York in September with concrete, realistic plans to enhance their nationally determined contributions by 2020 and in support to the implementation of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).”

The communique issued after consultations during a meeting of the [UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination](#), called on countries to ensure that appropriate “adaptation measures” are taken to protect people, jobs and ecosystems, “particularly people in those regions most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change including those at risk through forced displacement and migration.”

\$100 billion per year by 2020, for climate action

On the crucial issue of paying for the ambitious measures which need to be taken, the appeal described climate finance as “critical to deliver action on the necessary scale to address climate change...developed countries must deliver on the goal of mobilizing governments and the private sector to achieve the goal of \$100 billion per year by 2020, to support climate action in developing countries and further enhance their efforts on scaling-up financial resources.”

And in the race to innovate, the appeal calls for greater ambition, noting that “the Fourth Industrial Revolution offers tremendous potential for a paradigm shift to low-emission,

climate-resilient development pathways.”

The UN system is supporting “the enhancement of capacity of Member States to develop and utilize relevant data and technological innovations, to find solutions for climate and sustainable development challenges and disaster risk reduction and management, including the use of new and emerging technologies, including information and communication technologies, data and tools.

And the UN is going to practice what it is preaching from the Secretariat and beyond. “We will present our system-wide efforts towards reaching climate neutrality in our internal operations by 2020 and enhancing environmental and social sustainability in all UN activities”, says the joint appeal.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

If the Fourth Industrial Revolution is supposed to offer a “paradigm shift to low-emission, climate-resilient development pathways”, at a cost of US\$100 billion per year, it would be worth tracking in detail where that money is coming from, and weigh it against the amounts spent annually on weaponry and armaments. Travel & tourism industry professionals should note that the global military-industrial complex is one of the biggest guzzlers of money and natural resources, as well as a major environmental contaminator. Yet, it is never held accountable.



SDG 13:

**UN, African Union
in 'common battle'
for development
and climate change
financing**



World Bank/Dana Smillie. Rows of solar panels at the Ain Beni Mathar thermo-solar power plant in Morocco. (file 2010)



SDG 13: UN, African Union in ‘common battle’ for development and climate change financing

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 6 May 2019 - UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called for a “quantum leap” in funding for development and climate change for Africa, speaking to journalists on Monday, following the plenary meeting of the latest United Nations-African Union (AU) Conference, which took place in New York.

Mr. Guterres declared that the Organization’s work to promote peace and security, human rights, development and climate action, can only progress in Africa if the UN works hand in hand with the AU.

The UN chief emphasised the “alignment” between the UN’s and African Union’s respective plans to ramp up inclusive and environmentally responsible economic development: the UN’s [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, and the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

The common battle they face, he continued, is to secure the necessary financing for development, particularly for Africa. Mr. Guterres said that development there is a “fundamental precondition” for a more peaceful world, and for well-managed migration, and, therefore, that improved funding is “in the interests of the whole international community.”

With regard to climate change, the Secretary-General warned that more ambition is needed, because “we are not winning the battle,” and Africa is disproportionately affected: “the African continent practically does not contribute to climate change, but the African continent is one of the areas of the world where the impact of climate change is more dramatic and devastating.”

A joint communiqué released on Monday by the UN and African Union welcomed the “strong cooperation and collaboration between the two organizations”, and committed to continue to work closely together in addressing peace and security issues, and achieving sustainable development issues in Africa.

The communiqué described the [UN Climate Action Summit](#), which will take place in September, as “critical to mobilize the needed partnerships, resources” necessary to achieve international climate action goals, and noted the agreement of the leaders of both organizations to further strengthen their cooperation on adaptation for climate change ahead of the Summit and beyond.

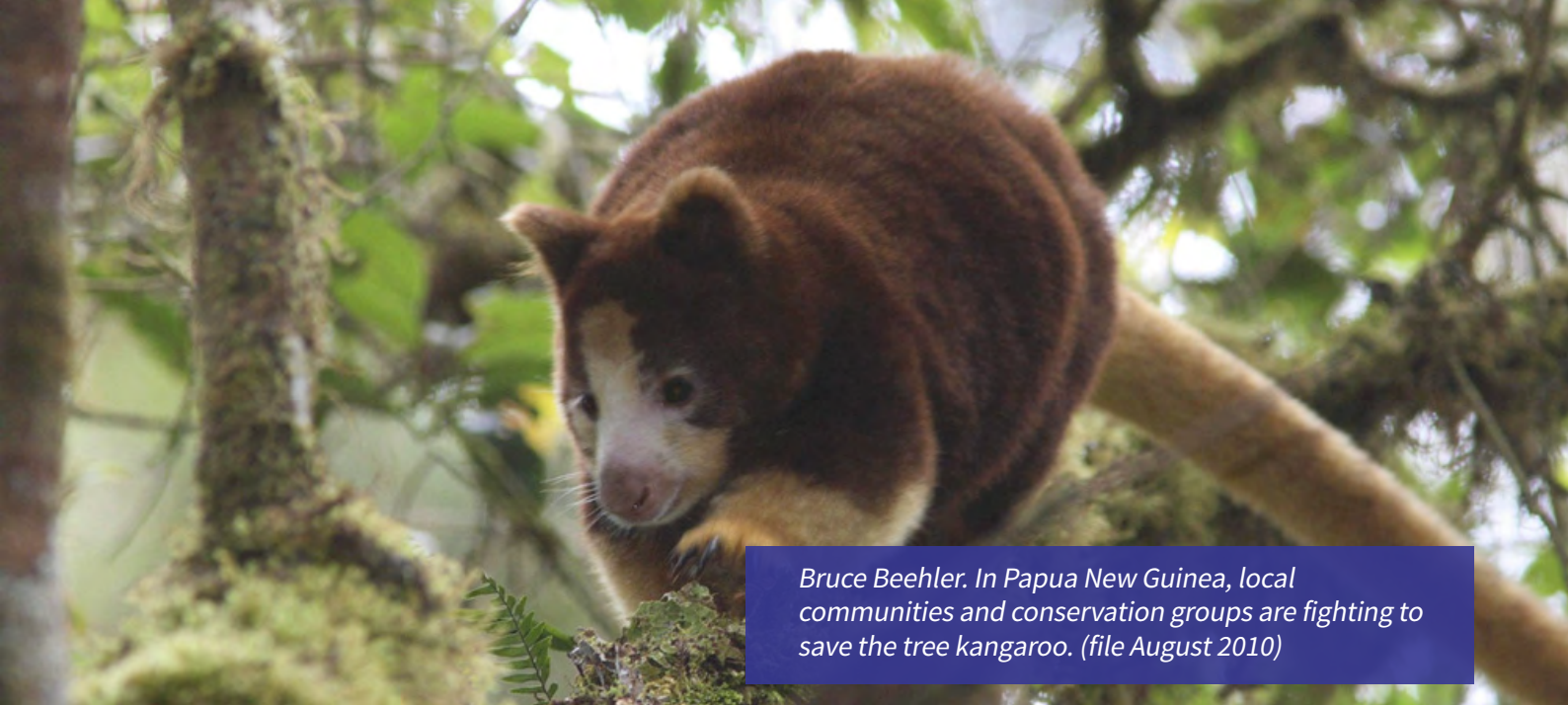
IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Africa’s biggest opportunity is to learn from the mistakes of the “developed countries” all of which are the primary culprits responsible for causing global warming in the first place. Today, investors are rushing into Africa, dangling the same bag of supposed development “goodies”. The Africans would be well advised to treat these lofty promises of nirvana with a pinch of salt, and start pursuing some alternative approaches.



SDG 15:

**Saving the tree
kangaroos of Papua
New Guinea**



Bruce Beehler. In Papua New Guinea, local communities and conservation groups are fighting to save the tree kangaroo. (file August 2010)



SDG 15: More dry years ahead for South-East Asia

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 20 May 2019 - The survival of an endangered animal which looks part kangaroo and part lemur has been secured thanks to a project in Papua New Guinea (PNG) supported by the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

The tree kangaroo which is only found in the rainforests of Australia, West Papua, and PNG is threatened due to hunting and habitat destruction.

But now the local and indigenous people of PNG, who typically hunted the marsupial, are acting as custodians of the ancient rainforests by promoting the sustainable use of the land and the management of what is now a conservation area.

Ahead of [International day for Biological Diversity](#) marked on 22 May, [read more here](#) about how the tree kangaroo is being protected by the people.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Yes, destruction of Nature is a man-made problem, and can be reversed by Man. More such reversals of policy and strategy need to go viral. Well-managed tourism can be a part of the solution.



SDG 15:

**African elephants
under continued
threat of poaching**



SDG 15: African elephants under continued threat of poaching

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 10 May 2019, - An updated assessment by a United Nations Environment Programme-administered treaty has confirmed that poaching continues to threaten the long-term survival of the African elephant.

Based on the Proportion of Illegally Killed Elephants data, or PIKE, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ([CITES](#)) has evaluated the levels of illegal killing through MIKE, the acronym for the Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants programme.

MIKE has calculated that illegal killing is the chief cause of death for elephants.

Evidence reveals that PIKE levels peaked in 2011 when an alarming 10 per cent of African elephants were poached, before steadily declining through 2017. That level has remained relatively unchanged throughout 2018.

Such high PIKE levels are of concern because even in well-established and protected elephant populations, the annual losses to illegal killing and other mortalities are not being compensated by birth rates.

Many African elephant populations are small and fragmented and not well-protected, making them even more vulnerable to poaching. As PIKE levels remain above 0.5 in Africa, the number of elephants in some countries continues to decline.

African elephant populations have fallen from an estimated 12 million a century ago, to some 400,000, according to the most recent estimations contained in the [2016 African Elephant Status Report](#).

“Illegal killing of African elephants for ivory remains a significant threat to elephant populations in

most of the range States”, said CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero. “At the same time, the human population of Africa has grown tenfold, from 125 million to 1,225 million, creating competition for land with elephants”.

While international trade in elephant ivory has been banned by CITES since 1990, opinions differ between countries about whether it should continue or not.

The African elephant and the debate over the ivory trade will be a major item on the agenda of the next triennial CITES Conference of the Parties, originally planned for May in Colombo, Sri Lanka, but now to be rescheduled for a later date.

“We must continue to reduce poaching and illegal trade in ivory and find solutions to ensure the coexistence of elephants with local people”, stressed Mr. Higuero. “The international community should further expand its work with the African range States to find solutions that work both for the elephants and for local communities”.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

What are the ecotourism pundits doing about this, too? Can they prove that years of promoting ecotourism has done anything whatsoever to help reduce poaching and the wildlife trade?



SDG 15:

**‘Race is on’ to halt
biodiversity loss in
Indonesia**



Peter Schmidt. Sumatran tigers are found only on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, where less than 400 exist today.



SDG 15: ‘Race is on’ to halt biodiversity loss in Indonesia

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 9 May 2019 - The “race is on” in Indonesia to halt the illegal trade in wildlife and the loss of biodiversity according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

The trade in wildlife in the South-East Asian country, which is estimated to be worth up to US\$1 billion a year, has already led to the extinction of some animal species and disrupted the region’s ecological balance.

Now, UNDP is working with the Indonesian government, conservation groups and local people, to reduce the illegal trading of animals and enforce wildlife protection.

On Monday, the UN warned that, globally, one million species risk becoming extinct within decades. Read more about the measures being taken, [here](#):

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

As problems slowly evolve into crises, Humanity is realising the value of these wondrous assets, which have so far been taken for granted. It is only when humans begin to lose their precious possessions that they begin to realise their value. That value is being realised in the area of good physical health as much as in the health of the natural environment. If “health and wellness” is now growing rapidly for humans, the “Health and Wellness” of the planet should also rise in importance.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



SDG 16:

**World must avoid a
new Cold War**



UN Russia/Yury Kochkin. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres addresses the opening session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2019 (SPIEF) (6 June 2019)



SDG 16: World must avoid a new Cold War

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 6 June 2019 - In a world where international relations have become “more chaotic,” world leaders must avoid a new Cold War, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) told delegates attending the International Economic Forum, in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg on Thursday.

[Responding](#) to questions in front of a live audience, Mr. Guterres called on leaders everywhere to show wisdom, and create the conditions in which the [2030 Agenda](#) for sustainable development (the UN’s initiative to end poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change) can be achieved.

The UN chief said that he refuses to see international relations as simply a confrontation between the United States and China, and stated his preference for a multi-polar world: “What we need is the United States, China, the Russian Federation, India, the European Union and several other key partners to address their problems in a multilateral way.”

The UN chief reminded his audience that Europe consisted of several rival powers at the beginning of the Twentieth Century but, with an absence of multilateral organizations, or effective platforms to resolve disputes peaceably, the result was the First World War.

Major powers, he said, need to play a relevant role, in a multipolar world with “multilateral forms of governance and international relations based on international law.”

A Secretary-General must be ‘an honest broker’

The UN chief’s appearance on stage ended with a question about his plans to remain in the post for a second term. Mr. Guterres responded by saying that, because the Secretary-General must be an “honest broker,” they office holder should never act in a way that could be seen as currying favour in

order to secure a fresh mandate.

“My position has always been - in my life, in all things - the same,” said Mr. Guterres. “When I am here, I do my best as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I do not think about what the future will bring. The day I will start thinking about the future I will start undermining my action today.”

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Geopolitical tensions are never good for travel & tourism. Cold wars dampen moods and put destinations in a high-risk category. Cold wars were supposed to have ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, exactly 30 years ago. The fact that they are resurfacing is cause for concern, and introspection.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



SDG 16:

**Conflict prevention,
mediation among
'most important
tools' to reduce
human suffering**



MINUSMA/Gema Cortes.
Peacekeepers from the UN mission in Mali, MINUSMA, conduct a justice and reconciliation meeting to help mediate the violence in Mali's central Mopti region.



SDG 16: Conflict prevention, mediation among 'most important tools' to reduce human suffering

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 12 June 2019 - Conflict prevention and mediation are two of “the most important tools at our disposal to reduce human suffering” United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the Security Council on Wednesday.

“When we act early, and are united, we can successfully prevent crises from escalating, saving lives and reducing suffering – fulfilling the most fundamental mandate of the United Nations”, he continued.

To further these aims, Mr. Guterres told the chamber that the UN was working with various parties to conflict, together with partners for peace, in regions and countries across the world.

He noted some “encouraging signs”, such as successful constitutional transfers of power in Mali and Madagascar; the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea; the revitalized agreement in South Sudan; and, after decades of dispute, “the designation of the Republic of North Macedonia to be internationally recognized”.

The UN also continues to push back against

serious challenges posed by complex conflicts.

While the Stockholm Agreement in Yemen between Government and Houthi opposition was “an important step”, the UN chief noted that “that must now move to a negotiated settlement”.

In the Central African Republic, the UN is helping to implement the African Union-mediated peace agreement; conducting robust operations to ensure armed groups’ adherence and facilitating local peace accords. And in Burkina Faso, it is working with a wide range of national actors to strengthen infrastructures for peace in response to rising sectarian violence.

Obstacles abound

Despite these efforts, enormous obstacles remain, including wars that continue to rage as “external actors dither or even fuel the violence” and as non-State armed groups and militias fragment, causing even greater chaos.

Moreover a resurgence of populism and policies contribute to resentment, marginalization and

extremism, even in societies that are not at war, rolling back human rights and the progress that has been made over recent decades on gender and inclusion, said the UN chief. It's civilians "who pay the price", he underscored.

Solutions prevail

Mr. Guterres elaborated on a broad range of tools set out in Chapter VI of the [UN Charter](#) and urged government to "make full use" of them.

"Sustainable Development is an end in itself, but it is also one of the most effective tools we have to prevent conflict", Mr. Guterres stressed. "The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) is our blueprint to create resilient, stable societies and to address the root causes of violence of all kinds".

He spelled out that his means "a strong focus on inclusivity, with a special emphasis on mainstreaming women's rights and gender equality across our prevention and mediation work".

While progress on women's participation in formal peace processes is "still lagging", the UN chief said, "we will continue to use creative strategies to advance women's participation, building on previous efforts including the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group".

Noting that some 600 million youth in fragile and conflict-affected states have a vital contribution to make to mediation and peacebuilding processes, he drew attention to the first International Symposium for Youth Participation in Peace Processes earlier this year as "an important step forward".

"Independent actors and non-governmental organizations, including the Elders, are a critical complementary element to our efforts", added the UN chief.

"But let's not fool ourselves," he continued. "Prevention and mediation will not work without broader political efforts".

The Secretary-General urged the Council and all Member States, "to strive for greater unity so that prevention and mediation efforts are as effective as possible" calling it "the only way to meet our responsibilities to the people we serve."

Spirit of inclusive dialogue

Speaking as Chair of The Elders, a group of independent global leaders founded by Nelson Mandela, to promote good governance and ethical leadership, former Irish President Mary Robinson urged the Council to approach the topics in the "spirit of inclusive dialogue and willingness to work for compromise and consensus in the interests of peace".



UN Photo/Loey Felipe | Mary Robinson, former Irish president and a member of The Elders, addresses a UN Security Council meeting on conflict prevention and mediation. (12 June 2019)

She painted a picture of fear, conflict and despair "from the streets of Khartoum to the townships of Harare; the bombed-out hospitals of Idlib to the ruined schools of Yemen; and the slums of Gaza to the Rohingya refugee camps of Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh".

"Over the decades the Council – and, particularly, its five permanent members – has failed to live up to its responsibilities and has favored realpolitik or short-term power stratagems rather than meeting the solemn commitments outlined in the UN Charter," she spelled out.

"Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the repeated use of the veto by certain

permanent members on resolutions aimed to prevent mass atrocities, including the use of chemical weapons on civilians” she stressed, adding that “the international community must not wait until a major tragedy”.

Council’s strong voice needed ‘more than ever’ - former UN chief

When the Security Council can cooperate and speak with a strong common voice, “its decisions can have a decisive impact, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the Chamber.

“This strong, common voice is needed more than ever at this current time, when the deceptive allure of populism and isolationism is growing across all continents, from North and South America to Africa, Asia and Europe,” he stated.

Faced with complex, multi-faceted and gravely serious challenges, Mr. Ban said it was “profoundly irresponsible”, that politicians

“collude in or deliberately stoke illusions” for their own gain, in full knowledge that no one country, however powerful, will be able to meet the global challenges on its own.

“The working methods of the Council could be improved” he maintained, advising members to “agree on a joint common position to address conflicts in their early stages”, including through timely and strong statements.

Turning to the nuclear threat, Mr. Ban that said the “risks of nuclear conflict are [higher](#) than they have been in several decades”.

There is also the [risk](#), he said, that “the whole architecture of arms control and nuclear non-proliferation that was built up during the decades of superpower confrontation may collapse, through a combination of neglect, hubris and ill-founded threat analysis...The consequences of failure do not bear contemplation”, he concluded.

IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

As geopolitical challenges continue to overshadow international relations, conflicts rage on unabated. Global diplomats are pointing out the underlying reasons for these conflicts in no uncertain terms. Travel & tourism leaders need to get their heads out of the sand and start echoing these comments in industry forums.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



SDG 16:

**One-in-five suffers
mental health
condition in conflict
zones**



© UNICEF/UN0312582/Filippov. Fourteen-year-old Sonia plans her walks well in advance around the small town of Novotoshivske in Ukraine because it is still littered with shrapnel and unexploded ordnance.



SDG 16: One-in-five suffers mental health condition in conflict zones

United Nations, (UN News Centre), 12 June 2019 - More than one-in-five people living in conflict-affected areas suffers from a mental illness, according to a new report based on UN figures, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to call for increased, sustained investment in mental health services in those zones.

Around 22 per cent of those affected, suffer depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder, according to an analysis of 129 studies published in *The Lancet* – a United Kingdom-based peer-reviewed medical journal.

“The new estimates, together with already available practical tools for helping people with mental health conditions in emergencies, add yet more weight to the argument for immediate and sustained investment, so that mental and psychosocial support is made available to all people in need living through conflict and its aftermath,” said study author Mark van Ommeren, who works in [WHO](#)’s Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse.

In conflict situations and other humanitarian emergencies, WHO provides support by:

- Supporting coordination and assessing the mental health needs of populations affected.
- Determining the existing support that is available on the ground and what more is needed.
- Helping to provide support capacity, either through training or bringing in additional resources.

The study also shows that about nine per cent of conflict-affected populations have a moderate to severe mental health condition; substantially higher than the global estimate for these mental health conditions in the general population.

“Depression and anxiety appeared to increase with age in conflict settings, and depression was more common among women than men”, according to the study.

The revised estimates use data from 39 countries published between 1980 and August 2017, categorized cases as mild, moderate or severe. Natural disasters and public health emergencies, such as recent Ebola virus outbreaks in Africa, were not included.

The findings suggested that past studies underestimated the burden of mental health conditions in conflict-affected areas, showing increased rates of severe, moderate and mild mental health issues, with the latter being the most prevalent.

“I am confident that our study provides the most accurate estimates available today of the prevalence of mental health conditions in areas of conflict”, said lead author of the study Fiona Charlson of the University of Queensland, Australia and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, in the United States.

In 2016, there were 53 ongoing conflicts in 37 countries, meaning that 12 per cent of the world’s population was living in an active conflict zone – an all-time high. Moreover, the fact that nearly 69 million people globally have been forcibly displaced by violence and conflict, makes it the highest global number since the Second World War.

“Despite their tragic consequences, when the political will exists, emergencies can be catalysts for building quality, sustainable mental health services that continue to help people in the long-term”, concluded the WHO author.



IMPORTANCE TO TRAVEL & TOURISM

Conflicts take their toll on peoples everywhere. Mental illness is probably the least of the problems. But these statistics underscore the need to do more to prevent conflicts in the first place. Respect for human life has to take priority over everything else.

