



UNCTAD XIII

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

DOHA - QATAR 21-26 APRIL 2012



SPECIAL EVENT

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT: WHAT CAN THE TOURISM SECTOR CONTRIBUTE?

Special event at UNCTAD XIII, organized in cooperation with the Steering Committee on Tourism for Development

20 APRIL, 10 a.m. – noon

BACKGROUND

For many decades, international tourism has experienced dynamic growth and continued expansion. Cross-border travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes has become one of the fastest-growing economic activities worldwide. The number of international tourist arrivals rose by almost forty times from 25 million in 1950 to 940 million in 2010. Even between 2000 and 2010 – a decade of boom as well as of grave economic and financial crises, severe pandemics and large-scale natural disasters, international tourist arrivals continued to grow at an average annual rate of 3.4 per cent. As growth has been particularly dynamic in developing and emerging regions, their share of international tourist arrivals increased from 31 per cent in 1990 to 47 per cent in 2010.¹

International tourism can be, and has been, an important source of economic growth in developing countries. This holds particularly true for least developed and other small, structurally weak and vulnerable countries, which otherwise face tremendous challenges in a rapidly changing and highly competitive global trading system. Tourism “is like an iceberg; the visible tip is travel, accommodation and tourist service; below the surface, there are multiple opportunities for households, micro, and small enterprises.”² Since many countries are endowed with often unique historic, natural and cultural assets that could be transformed into travel destinations, tourism is a universal activity with a significant local impact.

Tourism stimulates the local economy in destination countries through supply-chain linkages with other economic sectors, particularly agriculture. It promotes entrepreneurship and the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Tourism bolsters the diversification of the local economy and generates export income. Tourism-related demand for goods and services creates new jobs, in particular for youth and women, thus contributing to poverty reduction. Tourism can help generate income for populations in remote and rural areas, thereby reducing incentives for urban migration. In some countries, tourism has created funds for the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of the very assets on which it is based. Last but not least, tourism can contribute to the image-building of a country.

Tourism is primarily a private-sector-driven activity. However, without effective, coherent and coordinated government policies and actions in other sectors on which tourism activities depend, tourism would fail to exploit fully its potential for inclusive and sustainable growth and development. Worse, financial leakages, that is, the loss in tourism revenue due to the need to procure tourism-related goods and services from abroad, can significantly erode the positive economic benefits of tourism and make a country vulnerable to adverse environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts.

¹ UNWTO Tourism Highlights. 2011 Edition. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Madrid.

² Wong M, Christie I and Al Rowais S. Tourism in South Asia, “Benefits and Opportunities”, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2009.

PURPOSE

This event, organized in cooperation with the Steering Committee on Tourism for Development, will provide an opportunity for senior officials from member countries to deliberate on the critical role that tourism can play in national development strategies. Panellists from countries at different levels of tourism development will discuss how tourism, especially sustainable tourism, can contribute to growth and inclusive development and induce the promotion and modernization of productive capacities needed for structural change. Given the transversal nature of tourism, the debate will address a wide range of topics, including the strengthening of cross-sectoral linkages, enterprise development, investment attraction, environmental concerns, human resources policies, infrastructure constraints and other issues of critical importance for the tourism sector.

OUTCOME

The discussion is expected to shed new light on policies and measures that developing countries need to pursue to develop an internationally competitive tourism sector as part of national strategies aimed at achieving inclusive and sustainable growth and development. It will also highlight what UNCTAD and other member organizations of the Steering Committee on Tourism for Development can do to assist developing countries in these efforts.

ORGANIZATION

Introductory presentations by UNCTAD, UNWTO and the host country, followed by an interactive moderated discussion among the panellists held in a “Davos-style” setting. The audience will have an opportunity to participate in the question-and-answer session.

AGENDA

10.00 – 10.30 a.m. High-level statements by UNCTAD, UNWTO and the host country
10.30 – 11.30 a.m. Interactive moderated panel discussion
11.30 – noon Question-and-answer session with the audience

DOCUMENTS

SCTD Portfolio of Services (English only)

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