Measures to green the post-pandemic recovery: Sustainable tourism

19 January 2021

Marika Palosaari, UNEP
There is a need for tourism models that can withstand the impacts of environmental crises while helping to prevent them.
The pandemic has also exposed the existing vulnerabilities of some tourism destinations, including:

- Lack of efficient waste management
- Natural resource depletion
- Biodiversity loss
- Increased pollution
- Insufficient health and crisis preparedness
- Food insecurity
Potential impacts of COVID-19 in destinations and SDGs

Jobs accommodation and food services make 20% of all vulnerable positions. They are subject to furlough, layoffs.

Women are a major % of tourism labour force.

Reduced capacity for climate investment. Potential increase of local transportation emissions due consumer demands. Major international travel arrivals decrease, forcing focus on domestic tourism nature-based tourism and low carbon tourism models.

Waste management challenges including health and safety measures; recycling reduced; food waste may increase.

Trust and health considerations will drive consumer demands to meet social distancing and hygiene norms.

Drop in oil prices makes transition to renewable and sustainable energy investments less attractive.

Increase of plastic pollution and use of single use plastic.

Sanitization and hygiene standards will increase the use of water in tourism destinations.

1. No Poverty
2. Gender Equality
3. Affordable and Clean Energy
4. Decent Work and Economic Growth
5. Climate Action
6. Responsible Consumption and Production
7. Life Below Water
8. Clean Water and Sanitation

COVID-19 pandemic
Towards sustainable and nature-based tourism

• Measure 3: **Integrating biodiversity** into the Covid-19 recovery plans to minimize risks of future pandemics, to strengthen overall economic resilience, and to support human and animal well-being

• Measure 4: Establishment and management of **biosphere reserves** through an integrated approach to nature conservation and sustainable development

• Measure 5: Unlock the potential of **domestic tourism** to support sustainable rural and urban development

• Measure 6: **Nature-based solutions** - transformational change for adapting to climate change and help ongoing efforts to limit it
Integrating biodiversity into the Covid-19 recovery plans for the tourism sector

• Frameworks, pledges and partnerships: the UN Summit on Biodiversity, the European Green Deal, the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, One Health, the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy
• Conservation efforts including green space creation, forest conservation, habitat restoration and nature-based tourism as well as increasing protected areas.
• Initiatives for governments, industry, citizens; Clean Seas Campaign, Global Tourism Plastics Initiative; Eliminate, Innovate, Circulate
Nature-based solutions

- Incorporate NbS in development and spatial planning, and in the planning of relevant sectors, e.g. agriculture, forestry and water management;

- Integrate into national plans related to countries’ commitments under international processes, such as National Adaptation Plans

- Need to create the conditions and incentives that are required to enable, encourage and facilitate improved funding and investment flows.
The planned changes to the Champs-Élysées area. Photograph: PCA-Stream
Biosphere reserves

‘Learning places for sustainable development’; areas of terrestrial and coastal or marine ecosystems, recognized by UNESCO's programme on Man and the Biosphere.

1. conservation – landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation
2. development – foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable
3. logistic support – support for demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring
Domestic tourism for sustainable rural and urban development

Focus areas for support

- **legal, regulatory and institutional framework** (standard compliance etc.)
- **fiscal and financial instruments** such as green tourism taxes, grants, loans, and public-private partnerships
- **capacity development** for planning and management;
- **marketing and promotion**, for example, green accreditation and certification schemes to promote ecotourism and agritourism;
- **awareness raising** on sustainability concept for travellers and providers
Guidance for tourism amid COVID-19

https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-tourism
Advancing policies at the regional level

- Environment for Europe process towards the 9th ministerial conference in October 2022: ‘Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism’
- UNEP’s Pan European Assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic’s environmental impacts on the tourism value chains - 2021
- Regional forum on Sustainable development: Peer learning session: ‘Transforming Tourism for a sustainable, prosperous and inclusive post COVID world’ – March 2021 (UNEP, UNWTO, UNESCO, UNECE)
“It is time to rethink how the sector impacts our natural resources and ecosystems, building on existing work on sustainable tourism, to measure and manage it better and to advance the transition towards a low carbon and resilient tourism economy.”

UN Secretary-General policy brief