The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 159 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 500 Affiliate Members.
UNWTO Regional Conference on Sustainable Development through Tourism
Proceedings

Thimphu, Bhutan, 03 June 2019
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Acknowledgements

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The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is particularly grateful to the Tourism Council of Bhutan and the Kingdom of Bhutan for hosting and supporting the UNWTO Regional Conference on Sustainable Development through Tourism.

The UNWTO Delegation to the conference included:
- Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General
- Mr. Zhu Shanzhong, Executive Director
- Mr. Xu Jing, Director, Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific
- Mr. Dirk Glaesser, Director, Sustainable Development of Tourism
- Mr. Beka Jakeli, Coordinator for Member Relations
- Mr. Harry Hwang, Deputy Director, Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific
- Ms. Christine Brew, Technical Coordinator, Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific
- Mr. Paul Rogers, Consultant.
Introduction

The UNWTO Regional Conference on Sustainable Development through Tourism was convened in Thimphu, Bhutan on 3 June 2019. It was jointly organized by UNWTO and the Tourism Council of Bhutan, bringing together delegates and experts from over 20 countries across Asia, the Pacific and Europe. The event provided a platform to celebrate achievements, discuss regional opportunities and challenges and set out recommendations for action, especially with regards to sector sustainability in consumption and production. Given Bhutan’s world-renowned and highly successful approach to “high value – low impact” tourism, encouraged by the country’s equally renowned focus upon the development paradigm of Gross National Happiness (GNH), the conference also encouraged participants to explore opportunities for tourism to promote happiness and wellbeing through the promotion of inclusivity, equitable and balanced development.

This report captures the main themes, presentations and discussions of the conference. Its purpose is to widely disseminate conference insights and recommendations and reaffirm UNWTO and member state commitment to share lessons and good practice, thereby promoting sector sustainability.

Sustainability in the tourism sector is a complex and diverse issue increasingly questioned by stakeholders and the international media owing to the growth in tourist numbers around the world and mounting concerns of “overtourism” in many destinations. While UNWTO forecast worldwide international tourist arrivals to reach 1.4 billion in 2020, 7% sector growth in 2017 and 6% in 2018, saw the 1.4 billion figure reached two years earlier than expected. Strong economic growth, affordable air-travel, technological change, new business models and greater visa facilitation are credited with this accelerated growth. Focussing upon Asia and the Pacific region, in 2018 international visitor arrivals reached 345 million, suggesting 1 in 4 of all global tourists visit Asia and the Pacific destinations.

When responsibly planned and managed, tourism has the capacity to support job creation, promote inclusive social integration, protect natural and cultural heritage, conserve biodiversity, generate sustainable livelihoods and improve human wellbeing. As the sector continues to experience remarkable growth, new stakeholder partnerships to further strengthen positive impacts are needed, along with an unprecedented collective effort to address on-going challenges and negative impacts to promote sustainability.

During the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2015, 154 heads of state or government adopted the bold and ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to, inter alia, end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Based on this universal, integrated and transformative vision, UNWTO is placing its efforts and tireless work in contributing its technical assistance and capacity building to the attainment of these global goals. UNWTO is working with governments, public and private
partners, development banks, international and regional financial institutions, UN agencies and international organizations to help achieve the SDGs, placing a particular emphasis on Goals 8, 12 and 14, in which tourism is specifically mentioned. UNWTO’s summary publication, Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals further explains how tourism is linked to all of the 17 SDGs and in 2018, UNWTO launched its collaborative online platform to promote partnerships, share good practices and build synergies to deliver each of the SDGs.

In line with the global effort to achieve the SDGs, UNWTO is committed to enhance the sustainable development impacts of the tourism sector by 2030, by developing, promoting and up-scaling sustainable consumption and production practices (SCP) as set forth by SDG 12. The One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme, led by UNWTO, is a multi-stakeholder partnership that promotes networking among like-minded organizations and brings together existing and new initiatives focussed on decoupling tourism’s growth from the increased use of natural resources. It is recognized as an implementation mechanism for SDG 12 and reports officially to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on an annual basis. In addition to its work on SDG 12 with a view to boosting the efficient use of natural resources while producing less waste and addressing the challenges of climate change and biodiversity, the Programme has potential to advance other connected goals such as SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15 on climate and marine and terrestrial resources respectively.

As recognized by the UN General Assembly’s 2011 Resolution (A/RES/65/309) “Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development”, happiness can play an essential role in advancing a holistic approach to development given its connection with human wellbeing and calling for an inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth complementary to SCP. In Bhutan, the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) has been recognized as a development paradigm highlighting balanced growth on prosperity and happiness. For the Bhutanese Government, it has facilitated the drive towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance, the reduction in the gap between the rich and the poor and helped ensure good governance. The empowerment of Bhutanese people stands as one of its key directives. The four main pillars of GNH are:

1. Equitable and sustainable socioeconomic development;
2. Preservation and promotion of cultural and spiritual heritage;
3. Conservation of the environment; and
4. Good governance.

Building and expanding on these four pillars, the Centre for Bhutan Studies identifies nine GNH domains, each with their own indicators that enable the government machinery to measure and evaluate progress towards GNH. The four Pillars and nine domains are listed in the table below. Weblinks to further reading on the individual and collective value of the nine domains and their contribution to the happiness and wellbeing development paradigm are also provided.

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2 See: http://tourism4sdgs.org/.
3 See: http://sdt.unwto.org/about-oneplanet-stp.
4 See: www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/.

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Table I.1 Bhutan's four pillars and nine domains of Gross National Happiness

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Conference objectives

As tourism leaders of Asia and the Pacific region come together for the 31st Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia, the Regional Conference provides a strategic platform to examine:

1. The on-going opportunities and challenges of tourism development across the region;
2. Linkages between the economic, social and environmental impact of tourism in destinations;
3. How this translates into governance arrangements in the member countries; and
4. What measures are needed to strengthen sector governance and sustainability.

In this context, the conference objectives are to:

- Raise awareness of the global effort needed to achieve the SDGs and the important relationship between sustainable consumption and production in the tourism sector;
- Foster high-level commitments at both the regional and national levels to advance sustainable consumption and production in tourism in Asia and the Pacific;
- Understand how to plan, develop and implement national policies and initiatives to promote sustainable consumption and production in tourism in Asia and the Pacific;
- Acknowledge the important role of measurement and monitoring for the effective implementation of national policies and initiatives and its potential to catalyze transformation and sustainable development through tourism;
Structure of the Regional Conference

The event began with a traditional Bhutanese Chipdrel procession and Marchang ceremony and blessing to welcome the distinguished guests and conference participants. In the conference hall itself the opening ceremony commenced with the Bhutanese National Anthem and a short film presenting Bhutan to the World. Welcoming, congratulatory and opening remarks followed by Mr. Dorji Dradhul, Director General of the Tourism Council of Bhutan; Her Excellency Ms. Debbie Mineichi Remengesau, First Lady of the Republic of Palau; Ms. Ni Wayan Giri Adnyani, Chairman of the UNWTO Commission for South Asia; and Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the UNWTO. Their remarks were followed by an inauguration address by His Excellency Dr. Tanji Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of His Excellency Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister, Kingdom of Bhutan.

With the formalities and guiding statements concluded, a High-level Dialogue was convened to highlight good practice and focus attention on policy and governance frameworks that are necessary to support sector sustainability. The discussion, chaired by Dr. Dirk Glaesser, Director of UNWTO’s Department for Sustainable Development of Tourism, reviewed steps that can be taken by both public and the private sector actors during the planning, development and operational phases of tourism programmes and wider activity. It examined the roles and responsibilities of both the public and the private sector, and explored how different governance instruments are used to ensure that tourism makes an optimal contribution to all aspects of sustainability.

Two technical sessions followed the High-level Dialogue: panel session 1 was arranged to support the objectives of the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme, which aims to enhance the sustainable development impacts of the tourism sector by 2030 by developing, promoting and up-scaling sustainable consumption and production practices as set forth by SDG 12 and in connection with other goals such as SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15 on climate and marine and terrestrial resources. Panel session 2 concentrated on the philosophy of GNH and its ability to advance a more holistic and balanced approach to sustainable development and address some of the short-comings associated with an over-reliance upon economic growth at the expense of wider sociocultural, community and environmental goals.

The conference concluded with a Closing Session summarising the technical conclusions and recommendations raised during the event, and closing remarks on behalf of UNWTO and the Tourism Council of Bhutan.
Summary of the proceedings
Opening ceremony

Welcome remarks by Mr. Doji Dhradhul
Director General, Tourism Council of Bhutan, Kingdom of Bhutan

May I, on behalf of the People and Royal Government of Bhutan and UNWTO, have the honour and privilege to offer a very hearty welcome to all the delegates and guests to the opening ceremony of the UNWTO events scheduled for next three days.

Our special welcome to all the visiting delegates to our happy country.

I cannot help believing that some of our guest and delegates – particularly the first timers to Bhutan may be wondering about the cultural pageant that you have just experienced and it is only fair that I give some explanation.

Well, these are examples of our more than five hundred years old tradition and culture, which are not only alive but are part and parcel in our day life today.

Well, we started with the reception of the chief guest the Hon’ble Foreign Minister of Bhutan in a colourful and musical ceremonial procession, which concluded with the symbolic offering of wine. The ceremonial procession and wine offering are conducted for all important events. The ceremony basically seeks the blessings and support of all stakeholders including the supernatural elements and forces such as the invisible local deities for the successful conduct of the event. More significantly, it signifies our belief in the philosophy of interdependence and respect for all stakeholders including the natural elements like the mother earth, water, air, trees and mountains, which are fundamental to sustainable development.

Then we all stood up and sang our national anthem, which is common in other countries too. But what followed is the “recitation of the prayers for the long life of His Majesty The King, which I like to believe is unique. We Bhutanese believe that our Kings were, are and will be always our eternal source of inspiration and guidance. Our beloved Kings have always given the visionary leadership to our people and country in everything. For example, even in tourism, it is our beloved Kings that have steered us to the right path, of which “sustainability” is the cornerstone.

To highlight this point, I humbly like to quote His Majesty The King from the Royal address at a University convocation event in 2016, I quote:

“[…] in the 1970s, tourism as an industry was only introduced after the coronation of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. It was suggested to us then that Bhutan would benefit
economically from bringing in as many tourists as possible into the country. At that time, Bhutan was largely unknown to the outside world. And yet, with Drukgyal Zhipa at the helm, we had the confidence to make our own decisions- to decide that our approach to tourism policy would be that of high value low volume. It seemed counter-intuitive at a time when tourists to Bhutan were so few. There were many skeptics. But because of that policy, Brand Bhutan emerged. And you see the results of that policy for yourselves today. People who make it to Bhutan feel privileged to be our guest. In hindsight, we realize the profound wisdom of that decision, but we could have easily gone the other way, had it not been for that conviction we had to forge our own path, our future, and our destiny”. Unquote.

Hon’ble Chief Guest, Excellencies, Dashos, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are about 180 participants out of which 143 are international, representing 29 countries and international and regional organizations.

The over-riding theme of the event is Sustainable Development with Sustainable Consumption and Production and Gross National Happiness through Tourism as the specific themes.

So, over the next 3 days, ever refreshed by the clean Himalayan air, we hope to have many exchanges of ideas and numerous networks forged to take the tourism in our parts of the world to the next level of sustainability.

As highlighted earlier, the Kingdom of Bhutan being the birth place of Gross National Happiness and a pioneer of sustainable development, we are very honoured and happy to be hosting these UNWTO events.

I would also like to thank all our partners for this event, both local and international for their support. In particular we would like to thank the Provincial Government of Jeju Island, Republic of Korea and the Ministry of Tourism, the Philippines.

We would also like to offer a big “Thank you” to His Excellency the Secretary-General and his team at the UNWTO and the member states for choosing our country for these events.

We are confident that Bhutan will offer a happy space for the birth of innovative ideas and the necessary consensus to promote sustainable development through tourism and prepare for a better and more sustainable world for our future generations.

I on behalf of the UNWTO and TCB wish everyone a fruitful and enjoyable sessions as well as a very happy stay here in our country.

I would also like to welcome everyone to visit the exhibition and sale of the creations of our local start-up centre displayed in the courtyard.

Finally, I would like to once again welcome and thank the Hon’ble Foreign Minister and the Chairperson of the Tourism Council of Bhutan, other dignitaries and guests for being part of this opening ceremony.
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Hello or, as we say in my country, ALII!

It is my distinct honour to be here for the UNWTO Regional Conference among friends from nations and organizations around the world.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to His Majesty the King of Bhutan and the Bhutanese people for hosting this conference in your beautiful country.

I would like to thank Bhutan’s Prime Minister for his warm welcome. And a special thank you to the Director General of the Tourism Council of Bhutan and the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization for inviting me to attend and address you all today. It is a privilege to be here and to lead the delegation from my country.

I am from the Republic of Palau, a remote island nation situated in the north-eastern Pacific Ocean. By population we are one of the smallest nations on the planet with around 20,000 citizens, but we are a large ocean state with a sea the size of France.

Like Bhutan, Palau’s deep-rooted cultural traditions have been faithfully passed down through the generations. Our ancient cultural wisdom echoes that of Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness Index: emphasizing harmony with nature and traditional values via sustainable and equitable development; environmental conservation; preservation and promotion of culture; and promoting good governance.

In Palau, we rely on nature to survive. Caring for our precious land and oceans is just one of the many valuable lessons our ancestors taught us. They long foresaw the critical value of protecting our natural environment. It is essential to our continued existence and to our way of life. As Palauans, we have long known what the rest of the world is fast discovering: that without a healthy environment, we have no future.

Today, tourism is the world’s fastest growing industry. It is also Palau’s number 1 economic driver responsible for 85% of our GDP. And so, like many nations here, we face a pressing challenge: how to protect our pristine island paradise from destructive tourism practices, whilst protecting the future economy for the next generation.

That is why this conference and the solutions that arise from it, are so important to Palau and to the rest of the world. We need to better understand the how to support the sustainable development of tourism so that we can take steps to create better policy, infrastructure and initiatives.

With a world-leading reputation for sustainable tourism practices, Bhutan is the perfect place for us to discuss the urgent issues at hand. In creating the Gross National Happiness Index, the Kingdom of Bhutan built a new paradigm: one that set a precedent for other countries to follow.
This kind of innovative thinking is what the world needs to address the many urgent challenges we face.

In Palau we are adopting similar thinking around the challenge of educating our visitors about our way of life and helping them understand the urgent need to protect and preserve Palau, and the world, for future generations. 18 months ago, we launched the Palau Pledge: a mandatory oath to Palau’s children that all visitors must sign on entry, promising they will protect Palau for the sake of the next generation. The Pledge programme educates visitors on how to look after Palau and is backed up by laws based on our cultural tradition of conservation.

Like the Gross National Happiness Index, the Palau Pledge is being adopted by other countries and destinations around the world. Hawaii and New Zealand have announced similar Pledges: all rooted in their own ancient cultures. And more countries will follow this year. These pledges encourage people to think about their impact on the environment and show them how they can take action to minimize it. This can’t happen too soon. Our common future is under threat. Change is urgent.

Today we Palauans find ourselves unexpectedly on the front line of global environmental challenges such as climate change, global warming and pollution. As a mother and a grandmother, this is deeply concerning to me. Pollution threatens our marine life and the coral reefs that sustain our livelihood. Rising water levels as a result of climate change have destroyed parts of our country and will soon completely devastate some of our Pacific island neighbours – leaving their people without a country to call home.

We all aspire for our children to live happy, prosperous lives on a healthy planet. We want to leave a legacy that will help them develop as a society: aware of their unique heritage and free to celebrate their cultural identity. My husband has often been heard to quote the proverb “We do not inherit this earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.”

In the tourism industry, we have a huge opportunity and a huge responsibility to our planet and to the children who follow us. Everyone in this room has the power to create real and lasting change toward the preservation of our environment. So today, on behalf of the children of Palau, Bhutan and the world, I would like to invite you to use this conference as an opportunity to join together and help create the kind of world that will sustain our children and those that follow them.

We are all connected, and ultimately, we are all just visitors on this planet.

I wish you all a successful conference and thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you today.
Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, I would like to express my high appreciation and to congratulate the UNWTO under the leadership of the Secretary-General H.E. Zurab Pololikashvili and the Director of Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Xu Jing, and all UNWTO staff, in collaboration with the Government of Bhutan, for the excellent arrangements in making this 31th Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia possible. I would also like to congratulate the Government of Bhutan for successfully organizing the UNWTO Regional Seminar on Sustainable Development through Tourism. Allow me also convey our deep appreciation to the Government of Bhutan for its generous hospitality in hosting the meeting in this beautiful city of Thimphu, the Capital of the Kingdom of Bhutan. I trust that all delegations are having wonderful time in enjoyable environment during their stay in Bhutan.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

We are proud that till today, tourism is still experiencing the high strong growth rates (above 4% of the UNWTO prediction). As presented in the recent UNWTO Barometer, international tourist arrivals increased 6% in 2018 compared to 2017. This growth is the second highest growth and is still above the average growth rate of 4% since 2010. I believe that the UNWTO's forecasts of 3–4% increase in 2019 will be reached.

Our region, the Asia Pacific is the second rank region receiving international tourist arrival after Europe. With the increase of 6%, the International tourists to this region in 2018 recorded 342.6 million or shared 24.4% to the total international tourists of 1.4 billion. In Asia Pacific, it is recorded that arrivals in South-East Asia grew 7%, North-East Asia 6%, Oceania 3%, and I believe that in total the arrival growth in the East Asia and the Pacific more than 6%.

The Government of Indonesia is still in commitment putting tourism as one of the main priority sectors supporting the nation's economy. The achievement of our tourism development has been proved, namely: Indonesia’s tourism has been declared as having the ninth-fastest growing tourism sector in the world and the third in Asia (after China and India). Indonesia also declared as the fastest-growing tourism in Southeast Asia. The number of foreign tourists visiting Indonesia in 2018 was 15.8 million or an increase of 12.6% compared to 2017. This number was still below our target of 17 million visitors, due to the natural disasters such as the earthquake in Lombok and the earthquake that followed by tsunami in Banten.

Other contribution from tourism are USD 16.1 billion of foreign exchange earnings, 5.25% of GDP and 12.7 million job opportunities.

We are now hard working to accomplish the national target of 20 million international arrivals. We are expecting foreign exchange earnings about USD 17.9 billion at the end of 2019. Besides ordinary activities (establishing branding, advertising and selling) and extra ordinary effort (access incentive, hot-deals and competing destination marketing), initiatives taken by the Tourism Ministry to achieve this target, we call it “Super Extra Ordinary Effort”, are intensifying cross-border tourism, utilizing tourism hubs (Singapore, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur) and establishing low cost terminals to accommodate the LCC.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants from Member States,

Through this important conference with the topic of Sustainable Development through Tourism in my opinion, it is essential to prove that tourism is consistent in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As I mentioned above, the success of tourism development is not merely based on how many tourists are coming, however, the success should be measured by the extent to which the sector can contribute for better economy of the local people, to contribute in establishing the socioculture, as well as how the tourism be able to preserve the environment for our next generations. In this context, it is the responsibility of all tourism stakeholders to assist and facilitate the implementation of sustainable tourism development in order to benefit global society while still minimizing or even avoiding its negative impacts.

In addition, the concrete implementation of sustainable tourism is realized with three particular programmes:

1. Sustainable Tourism Destination: a programme to make our Top 10 Priority Tourism Destinations is developed based on STD principles.

2. Sustainable Tourism Observatory (STO): until now we have established 24 STOs across Indonesia (5 STO have been endorsed by UNWTO), these destinations are observed by appointed universities served as Monitoring Centre for Sustainable Tourism Observatory (MCSTO).

3. Sustainable Tourism Certification: this is a programme to acknowledge destinations which already implemented STD principles in their tourism development.

In March 2019, our Minister has officially established Indonesia Sustainable Tourism Council to synchronize the issue of SDGs, Responsible Tourism, Climate Change, and some other strategic programmes, with relevant policies happened in our inter-related ministries. The council is also responsible to provide inputs and make recommendations when there is constraint regarding STD in Indonesia.

Again, we very appreciate the Government of Bhutan for organizing the conference by emphasizing the sustainable development. It shows that the UNWTO Member States remain on our commitment for spending great attention to the sustainable tourism development as the top priority.
Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues

In closing my communication, I appeal to all Member States to increase our cooperation to share to each other on how your experiences in developing sustainable tourism development.

Thank you.
Opening remarks by Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili
Secretary-General, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, First Lady of Palau, Secretary of Tourism, esteemed colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great please to formally open the 31st Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia.

This will be an opportunity to celebrate the growing strength of the Asia-Pacific tourism sector. International arrivals for the region reached 345 million last year. That’s a 6% increase on the previous year. And it means that globally, 1 in 4 tourists are visiting destinations in Asia and the Pacific.

Let us use these three days to not only congratulate ourselves on a job well done. Our shared goal is to work together to face up to the challenges and responsibilities that increased tourist numbers will bring.

Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, your presence here today honours us.

On behalf of UNWTO, I thank you for your warm and generous hospitality. I also applaud your Government’s evident commitment to embracing tourism as a driver of national development. You are an example for other countries to follow. Here, tourism not only generates wealth, it also supports many jobs, preserves social and cultural heritage and, as a result, is a contributing factor to Gross National Happiness.

Thank you also for agreeing to host several meetings at our General Assembly, due to be held in Saint Petersburg this September. UNWTO thanks Bhutan for its cooperation and its readiness to take the lead in using tourism as a catalyst for change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you all for your participation and for your enthusiasm for sustainable growth through tourism. As UNWTO Secretary-General, it is my firm belief that strong partnerships are vital if tourism is to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

This means strong cooperation not just between the public and private sectors but between countries and regions. With this in mind, I urge you all to share your knowledge and insights with one another over the coming days.

Together, we can ensure the growing strength of Asia and the Pacific’s tourism sector drives economic development and transforms lives.

Thank you.
Inauguration address by His Excellency Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
on behalf of His Excellency Lyonpo Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister,
Kingdom of Bhutan

At the outset, I would like to convey my Honourable Prime Minister's apologies for not being able to attend this inaugural session as planned. He would have loved to be here to meet all of you, however as many of you are already aware, the summer session of the parliament is going on as we speak and he had to be there this morning to attend a question and answer session.

Therefore, on his and the Royal Government of Bhutan's behalf, it is my great pleasure that I welcome each one of you to Bhutan. I am honoured to be part of this inaugural event of the 31st Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia, 57th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for South Asia, 53rd Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific, and UNWTO Regional Conference on Sustainable Development through Tourism.

Bhutan is hosting the UNWTO meeting of any kind for the first time and I would like to express our gratitude to all of the Member States for supporting our offer to host this meeting.

Excellencies,

Our ancestors dating as far back to the ages when they were gatherers and hunters wandered between places in search of food, or they were driven by curiosity. Much later in the history of human civilisation, people travelled beyond their traditional confines for trade and commerce, for education, in search of fertile fields, in search of adventure and many more. I believe these human activities were the antecedents to modern tourism.

Tourism as we know today is a global industry catering to more than a billion travellers around the world annually. According to UNWTO data, total exports from international tourism touched a mind-boggling USD 5 billion a day on average in 2018. International tourism accounted for 29% of the world's services exports and for the seventh year in a row, growth in tourism exports was higher than growth in merchandise exports. There is no doubt that tourism is a medium which has enabled people to share culture and ideas. It is an industry which directly or indirectly supports the livelihood of more numbers of people that perhaps any other forms of trade. The aviation industry, the hoteliers and restaurants, transporters, local farmers and craftsmen, and the retailers all thrive or wither on how the tourism industry performs.

Tourism also has its own challenges. Sometimes, it is easy to forget that the travel industry extends further than just the people and the businesses we sell services and products to. The bigger picture stretches beyond the travellers encompassing local residences, natural ecosystems and the sustainability of the industry in general. This is where the challenges of mass tourism rears its head.
Bhutan opened its doors to tourism in 1974 with the establishment of the erstwhile Bhutan Tourism Corporation. Right from the beginning, to make tourism sustainable we instituted a policy of “High Value – Low Volume” tourism. In that first year a total of just 287 tourists visited Bhutan. With the expansion of tourism products and infrastructure over the years, Bhutan received over a quarter of a million visitors from all over the world in 2018. This has already spurred a debate on whether Bhutan has the carrying capacity for such a large influx of tourists. The Royal Government is rethinking its tourism policy to make it one of the major drivers of the economy, but one which strikes a fine balance between commerce and the strong conservationist Bhutanese ethos.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations adopted resolution “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in September 2015. The 2030 Agenda is intended to be a supremely ambitious and transformational vision to address the 16 key challenges our world continues to face. With a total international tourism export valued at USD 1.7 trillion in 2018, tourism has the potential to address and help the world achieve all of the sustainable development goals and transform our world. We must ensure that we transform our world for the better and more importantly ensure the transformation is sustainable.

As leaders and professionals from the tourism industry, the opportunity of the occasion to deliberate on sustainable tourism development, and link between the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism on our destinations must not be lost. It is time for us to reaffirm our commitment to promote sustainable tourism and use it as a means to achieve the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

In closing, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his team from the UNWTO Secretariat and the Tourism Council of Bhutan for organizing this important event. I also would like to thank all the distinguished delegates from 25 countries for visiting Bhutan for this meeting. I do hope that apart from attending the meetings, you will also find time to meet people, visit some sites and promote sustainable tourism in Bhutan. Once again, please accept our warmest welcome and wish you all a memorable stay in Bhutan.

Thank you and Tashi Delek.
Setting the scene

The High-Level Dialogue was introduced by Mr. Xu Jing, Director of UNWTO’s Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific. Mr. Xu Jing, drew attention to the remarkable and unrelenting growth of the tourism sector in recent years. In the context of the SDGs, he referenced the 2015 UN General Assembly Assembly’s Resolution entitled “The Future We Want” and the need to focus upon issues beyond numeric growth. Emphasis was given to the need to deliver a future that meets the needs of our next generation. One that considers a more balanced, inclusive and equitable development model. The importance of learning and sharing views between countries and delegates, especially the priority needs and concerns of national tourism organizations, was underlined as central to achieving models of sustainability. In the search for sustainability, Mr. Xu Jing highlighted the noteworthy role of the Government of Bhutan in promoting Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a development agenda focussed upon balancing growth, prosperity and happiness for its citizens. He drew attention to the 2011 UN Resolution on Happiness, on how “happiness” plays an essential role:

– In advancing a more holistic approach to development;
– Linked directly with human wellbeing; and
– Complementary to sustainable consumption and production.

Mr. Xu Jing also underscored how Bhutan has used its GNH agenda to facilitate a drive towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance, reduce the gap between rich and poor and use people empowerment to advance good governance.

Turning to the deliberations ahead, Mr. Xu Jing noted his pleasure to be joining his Secretary-General and the Director General of the Tourism Council of Bhutan. He welcomed all delegates to the gathering and encouraged all participants to embark on their own “happiness journey”, noting there could be no better place to discuss sustainability matters than in this carbon negative destination of Bhutan. Alluding again to the strong performance of the tourism sector regionally and globally, Mr. Xu Jing emphasized that with growth comes responsibility; a responsibility to align the tourism sector with the 2030 agenda and the 17 SDGs, particularly how tourism can help reduce poverty, protect the planet and foster overall prosperity. Specifically, he emphasized how he and UNWTO colleagues wanted to listen to policymakers and industry representatives to understand what policy directions and good practices should be adopted by the conference and recommended to wider industry stakeholders throughout the region and beyond.
Dialogue participants

Moderator:
Dr. Dirk Glaesser
Director of UNWTO’s Department for Sustainable Development of Tourism

Panellists:
Mr. Dorji Dhradhul
Director General, Tourism Council of Bhutan

Mr. Bob Loughman
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism and Trades, Vanuatu

Mr. Md. Mahbub Ali
State Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Bangladesh

Mr. Ahmed Salih
Minister of State for Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Maldives

Ms. Ni Wayan Giri Adnyani
Deputy Minister for Industry and Institutional Development, Indonesia

Mr. Suman Billa
Joint Secretary, Ministry of State for Tourism, India

Mr. Siripala Hettiarachchi
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism Development, Wildlife and Christian Religious Affairs, Sri Lanka

Mr. Jun Takashina
Vice-Commissioner, Japan Tourism Agency

Ms. Bayasgalan Saranjav
Director General, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia

Ms. Yaying Li
Deputy Director-General, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, China

Ms. Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes
Director, Macao Government Tourism Office

Mr. Mohan Krishna Sapkota
Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal

Dr. Mario Hardy
CEO, PATA
Objectives and conclusions

The High-Level Dialogue addressed policy and governance frameworks that underpin and support the sustainable development of tourism. It reviewed steps that can be taken by both the public and the private sector during the planning, development and operation of tourism initiatives. It looked at the roles and responsibilities of both the public and the private sector, and explored how different governance instruments are used to ensure that tourism makes an optimal contribution to all aspects of sustainability. To prepare for the dialogue the participants were asked to consider three sets of issues, namely:

1. Issues and priorities placed upon national tourism organizations and their ability to effectively rise to these challenges: for example, the level of intergovernmental support, public-private sector solutions, human resource challenges, role of development partners and external funding, emphasis upon visitor numbers versus quality growth and climate change;

2. Actions being taken by corporations to promote or undermine sustainable tourism: for example, innovative public-private partnerships, success of advocacy and sustainable tourism certification initiatives, disruptive practices of industry innovators; and

3. Impacts and consequences of the term “overtourism” in relation to its growing media use, together with challenges and solutions for destinations; for example, to what extent are high-visitor numbers causing destination problems, how are destination communities responding to issues of “overtourism”, and what are the most promising solutions?

The main conclusions reached by the high-level dialogue included:

- Tourism, while having a diverse and multi-faceted footprint, is fundamentally an industry about people and places and the relationships between them. To promote sustainable production and consumption, host and guest interactions are about more than economic exchange. Interactions between them necessitate mutual respect and a shared responsibility to care for the destination, its people and their environment.

- Tourism is an expanding industry. Its development entails constant assessment of positive and negative impacts and the refinement of policy and practice to ensure host communities and their environment are among the industry’s primary beneficiaries. The greater the engagement and collective happiness and wellbeing of the host community, the greater the likelihood of avoiding issues of “overtourism”.

- The path to sustainability in tourism-related production and consumption is closely associated with:
  - Research;
  - Policy design and implementation;
  - Advocacy;
  - Training, education and capacity building;
  - Identifying performance indicators;
  - Certification; and,
  - Monitoring and evaluation.

Issues related to engaging host communities and their business associations in policy, planning and management processes and reducing the sector’s carbon footprint are among the most pressing issues to address. Stakeholder partnerships to address challenges are fundamental to success.
Summary of the discussion

Opening the dialogue and focusing upon destination planning to avoid “overtourism”, Ms. Ni Wayan Giri Adnyani emphasized the need for 4 Ps, namely: political commitment, a coherent policy environment, stakeholder partnerships and a focus upon people. Linking with the concept of Bhutan’s GNH, she spoke about Bali’s philosophy of Tri Karana as an example and expression of cultural values aligned with sustainability principles. Important in this is the recognition of the relationships between people, their environment and the “creator”. In other words, the spiritual side of humanity, recognizing the earth as a powerful ecosystem that needs to be managed with care and respect and that the tourism sector must also be developed to care for and respect natural resources and ecosystems.

Speaking on behalf of the Maldives, Mr. Ahmed Salih highlighted that sustainability for the tourism sector in the Maldives, and its alignment with the SDG’s, depends upon the host-guest relationship. Local people must interact with tourists, not just in terms of an economic or commercial relationship but rather in terms of deeper sociocultural exchange and understanding. To bring about positive exchange, local people need to understand the dynamics of the tourism sector as a vehicle for development and be consulted and involved in its development. Mr. Ahmed Salih emphasized the need for innovation and new approaches to reach out to local communities and actively engage them in destination and excursion planning.

Picking upon people-centred approaches to destination planning and excursion management, Ms. Bayasgalan Saranjav reminded the participants that Mongolia is a country of 3 million people. While the country’s cultural traditions are centred around nomadism, recent changes have led to rapid urbanization with large numbers of people – around half the total population – moving to the country’s capital Ulaanbaatar. Against this trend, and creating challenges for the tourism sector, it is recognized that Mongolia’s tourism potential relies heavily on its vast landscapes and the celebration of the nomadic traditions of its people. To promote these core products the Government is developing a policy and legal framework that includes the provision of favourable loans for local entrepreneurs enabling them to develop rural and traditional accommodation that complies with certain environmental and cultural heritage standards. These measures have proved very successful and are encouraging the expansion of Mongolia’s primary tourism product.

Referencing China’s commitment to the SDGs and the growing priority extended to the tourism sector, Ms. Yaying Li explained how China’s 13th Five-Year Plan and its new tourism policy advocate the concept and approach of ‘holistic tourism’. Holistic tourism recognizes the diverse, comprehensive and cross-cutting nature of the tourism industry including its reach across the economic, social and environmental development arenas, as well as its ability to touch the lives of vast numbers of people at the destination level. For this reason, tourism should be planned and managed in a holistic manner and, equally, local community engagement in tourism planning is an essential part of the holistic tourism approach. Increased budgets are being made available to encourage entrepreneurship in the sector especially sector diversification and the design and development of new products, excursions and services.

Citing the importance of tourism to Sri Lanka, Mr. Siripala Hettiarachchi noted tourism is positioned among the country’s top three foreign exchange earners. To raise the profile of the sector both domestically and internationally, the Government in partnership with UNDP has recently launched the National Tourism Certification Scheme (NTCS). The NTCS is designed to promote quality
tourism by incentivising tourism businesses and destinations to transition towards socially and environmentally responsible tourism. The scheme recognizes and promotes high-value extraordinary experiences that reflect Sri Lanka’s natural beauty and cultural heritage. The NTCS aligns with the GSTC’s destination and industry criteria and seeks to raise awareness and build technical capacity among all tourism stakeholders, especially the private sector encouraging more accountability in sustainable production and consumption practices.

Recognizing Japan is facing a series of development challenges related to its falling birth rate and aging population, Mr. Jun Takashina confirmed the Japanese Government’s growing commitment to tourism, placing very high importance upon the sector. This was demonstrated in March 2016 with the Prime Minister setting a target to receive 40 million international visitors by 2020. Growing from 7.1 million visitors in 2011, in 2018 Japan received over 31 million international arrivals. In addition, Japan is emphasizing the importance of the sector by convening the first ever Tourism Ministers’ meeting during its hosting of the 2019 G20 meetings. This assembly of the member countries’ top tourism officials will be held on 20 October 2019 and will give special emphasis to managing tourism to benefit both the destination’s hosts and visitors. Japan’s hosting of the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Olympics in 2020 are a further signal of the country’s ability to host world-class events and celebrate its iconic natural and cultural heritage.

Picking up on growing global interest in the happiness and wellbeing movement, Mr. Bob Loughman pointed out, Vanuatu has twice been positioned as the happiest place on earth according to the Happy Planet Index which aggregates scores for life-expectancy, well-being, ecological footprint and inequality. Mr. Loughman stressed that Vanuatu has recently approved its first tourism policy, which aligns with the GSTC criteria and is designed to highlight and address the country’s response to climate change. Given the significance of the climate change threat faced by Vanuatu, Mr. Loughman noted his country is pioneering new directions in its tourism sector by allowing only sustainability certified businesses to operate in its protected areas. 

Mr. Md. Mahbub Ali spoke about Bangladesh’s international reputation for its warm, generous and hospitable people and the importance of tourism as a tool for socioeconomic and environmental development. He alluded to transport challenges facing the tourism sector in the country, the need to improve access to urban and especially rural areas to facilitate stronger host–guest linkages and the spread of positive impacts throughout the country. Picking up on the point about access issues, Dr. Dirk Glaesser reminded participants of the critical role of transportation to the sector and the increased focus and attention being given to carbon-footprint issues. He referenced the carbon-footprint of the aviation sector, as well as vehicle emissions and asked participants how such impacts are being addressed when visitor movements depend so heavily upon these forms of transport.

While pointing out the small physical size of Macao, China, at just 31 km² and the reliance upon tourism as the nation’s main industry, Ms. Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes cited the recent opening of the Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macao Bridge and its significance in reducing carbon emissions from local air-travel. At the same time the crossing has become a visitor attraction in its own right. In 2018 Macao, China, received some 35.8 million visitors, an increase of around 20% on the 2017 figure and approximately half of whom stay overnight. Visitor numbers are

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1 See: http://happyplanetindex.org/.
expected to reach 40 million in 2019. Referencing the size of the visitors’ retail spending and its importance in terms of distributing economic benefits to the local population, she also highlighted how tourism has enabled local people to enjoy free education for last fifteen years, residents over 65 years of age to receive state payments of USD 600 per month and kept unemployment as low as 1.7% of the population.

Speaking on behalf of PATA, Dr. Mario Hardy referenced the recent PATA Annual Summit’s PATA/UNWTO Leader’s Debate\(^2\) which pitched two high-level teams from the public and private sectors against each other on the topic of the “Most Important Goal of the 17 SDGs”. The two teams debated the merits of SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) with the audience given the opportunity to vote for the team with the most persuasive argument. In the event Dr. Hardy shared with the participants that the team scores were an absolute tie. He went on to stress how each of the SDGs are mutually supportive and flagged up the importance of sector partnerships to underscore sector sustainability, he noted partnerships are critical to helping each other, as well as those not yet here.

Addressing issues and priorities to address sustainable consumption and production in Nepal, Mr. Mohan Krishna Sapkota pointed out his country’s policies and programmes to promote human- and environmental-centred approaches to tourism development. Critical in this regard are homestay and hospitality programmes that are encouraged by central and regional governments and delivered through partnerships between entrepreneurs from local communities and the private sector. Mr. Sapkota referenced country-wide examples of homestay initiatives and how they have been strengthened through government funded hospitality trainings that have simultaneously delivered skill sets enabling local communities to promote environmental sustainability. The latter dove-tailing with Nepal’s strong focus on communities through its extensive network of protected areas including the conservation area and national park buffer-zone policies and programmes.

Digging deeper into diligence issues and policy effectiveness, Mr. Glaesser drew attention to the need for policy and programme feedback from target communities and stakeholders. Ms. Giri Adnyani responded, noting that more than 2,000 Indonesian villages are directly engaged in tourism development programmes and that monitoring forms are an integral part of these interventions. Picking up on this point, Mr. Suman Billa emphasized that interventions must be driven at the site level with the active engagement of local people, and this is how policy successes are measured in India. Mr. Ahmed Salih, added that in terms of good governance, the Maldives works to ensure destination communities are fully consulted and included in tourism planning and increasingly take the lead in proposing sites and resources to be developed. Referencing Vanuatu, Mr. Bob Loughman noted that people are demonstrably happy when policies are effective and working. He added that local people are responsible for the country’s high position in the Happy Planet Index, as they are the ones taking the Happy Planet survey. On behalf of Macao, China, Ms. Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes noted that when the Government is formulating major policies it does so through a public consultation process that lasts a minimum of two-months.

Turning to impact management at the site level, Dr. Mario Hardy introduced the topic of waste management and in particular the amount of plastic in the environment. He concluded that tough decisions are needed to resolve this issue and that responsibility needs to be taken at all levels.

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While tough decisions are needed, solutions can be easy if we all take responsibility. Especially in the case of drinking water where a growing number of alternatives are available to buying and using plastic bottles, including resorts and conferences providing refills for people carrying their own recyclable cups and bottles. Mr. Mohan Krishna Sapkota agreed that communities should feel responsible for waste management issues and must take ownership of them. He cited Nepal’s buffer zone policy and related interventions that help fund and support community driven waste management programmes. Such programmes also dovetail with incentives to engage local people in community forestry programmes. Mr. Md. Mahbub Ali contrasted these efforts with similar work to engage local communities in natural resource management initiatives in Bangladesh and reaffirmed the country’s commitment to the SDGs and using tourism as a vehicle to deliver these commitments.

To conclude the session, Mr. Dorji Dhradhul spoke of the imperative to find new and innovative ways to engage businesses and local communities in the formulation of tourism policy and approaches to destination planning. He reaffirmed Bhutan’s commitment to GNH and using related policy tools to achieve the SDGs. Citing a further example of how this is being achieved he alluded to a process recently introduced to encourage and enable businesses to become GNH certified3, thereby illustrating to clients, customers, partners, local communities and Government the company’s commitment to sustainability principles and practices.

3 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHLyGYhcTH8.
Technical session
Panel session 1

SDGs, sustainable consumption and production through tourism

Setting the scene

Panel session 1 provided participants with an overview of the integration of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) into national tourism policies. The opening key note presentation offered a global perspective and regional overview of tourism-related SCP policy frameworks, setting the scene for the panellists to share examples of SCP issues and practices from their countries and beyond.

In his keynote, Dr. Dirk Glaesser began with references to the SDGs as a unified vision and approach to address pressing issues related to sustainable development. The presentation gave special focus to SDG 12, as a goal that makes explicit reference to the tourism sector and one with multiple connections to other SDGs given the crosscutting nature of SCP.

In his opening comments, Mr. Dirk Glaesser reminded the audience that a core objective of the 2030 SDG agenda is to decouple economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation, notably through improved resource efficiency, while improving people’s well-being. This can occur with a shift towards more SCP, which is wholly relevant to tourism as it is essential to decouple the sector’s expansion from its environmental impacts to ensure a sustainable future. Hence it is important for tourism stakeholders to grasp concepts surrounding SCP. To help with this the One Planet network1 offers an implementation approach for SDG 12, which includes a set of impact indicators pertinent to tourism that breaks down the concept of SCP into more detailed and tangible elements. These five detailed elements are biodiversity protection, energy use efficiency, GHG emissions reduction, water use efficiency and waste reduction.

Mr. Dirk Glaesser stressed that shifting to SCP requires policies that create conducive environments, social and physical infrastructure and markets, and a transformation of business practices along global value chains. As shown in the report from 2017 Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030,2 a total of 108 countries have national policies and initiatives relevant to SCP (data that is available to the One Planet network). Focussing upon Asia, he noted economic growth and rapid urbanization are leading to greater resource use and environmental stress. Aware of this, regional stakeholders are increasingly utilising SCP approaches, laying a sound foundation for further work in this arena. While SCP efforts in Asia are mainly focussed on the manufacturing sector, cleaner production, pollution control, waste management and efficiency approaches, some countries have started addressing social aspects, as shown through

1 See: www.oneplanetnetwork.org.
efforts towards considering sustainable consumption. Other countries, such as China with its National Plan on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, integrate sustainable consumption and production into a broad sustainable development strategy. Mr. Dirk Glaesser stated few national plans are specifically dedicated to SCP in the region. Globally there are approximately 40 national SCP plans with just four in East Asia and the Pacific (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam) and one for South Asia (Pakistan). All, except Viet Nam, mention tourism as a priority sector.

Having reviewed the overall policy landscape in Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Dirk Glaesser cited the results of the recent UNWTO research project which sought to understand how SCP is being integrated in sectorial policies for tourism at the national level. He noted tourism policies play a relevant role in advancing SCP, provided they have components aimed at reducing environmental impacts of consumption and production patterns supported by policy instruments enabling their implementation. He added UNWTO embarked on this research with support from UN Environment and the Government of France. Based on evidence from 101 national tourism policies from around the world, the research presents the first global assessment of SCP policy instruments in national tourism. The accompany report\(^3\) details the progress achieved towards implementing SDG Target 12.b., which calls for “the development and implementation of tools to monitor sustainable development impacts of tourism”.

Turning to the research findings, Mr. Dirk Glaesser shared two key findings relating to sustainability commitment. Firstly, while all the national tourism policies reviewed include references to sustainability, notably as part of their objectives or vision, 55% include detailed references (e.g., as a cross-cutting element or with more holistic interpretations). Secondly, policies from 61% of emerging economies include detailed references to sustainability, whereas only 25% of advanced economies included detailed references to sustainability. Regions with detailed references to sustainability are South Asia (80%) and the Americas (79%), followed by Africa and Europe (both 47%), the Middle East (33%) and East Asia and the Pacific (30%). Notably, countries included in the research cover more than 50% of UNWTO Member States and together receive more than 50% of international tourist arrivals in each region (except East Asia and the Pacific). The limitations of regional trends for East Asia and the Pacific should be borne in mind.

Mr. Dirk Glaesser referenced other important research findings including, for example, that 67% of the national policies surveyed include references to resource efficiency, while this figure rises to 90% for countries with more in-depth interpretations of sustainability in their policies. Further, 64% of national policy documents connect sustainability to sector competitiveness, which helps stakeholders recognize that sustainability not only pays-off but is also important in terms of competitive advantage (these countries were among the top scorers of the competitiveness index for travel and tourism of the World Economic Forum). Interestingly, countries with NTAs in a ministerial structure exclusively devoted to tourism or forming part of a multi-competence ministerial structure with tourism in its name have, in a majority of cases, national tourism policies illustrating stronger sustainability commitments, a higher prevalence of resource efficiency as a thematic area and higher references to the five more detailed “SCP impact areas”.

When analysing the presence of SCP in national tourism policies by breaking down the concept into the five more detailed “SCP impact areas”, findings suggest that tourism policymakers are aware of the importance of addressing biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use, energy use efficiency, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction, waste reduction and water use efficiency, although some of these elements were referred to in a flexible or rather scattered way within national tourism policies. Moreover, only 30% of those surveyed referenced all five areas. Reference to policy instruments was also analysed. Policy instruments represent opportunities to bridge the gap between policy development and implementation. While almost all policies (98%) make references to policy instruments for at least one SCP impact area, none make references to instruments for three or more. Except for policy instruments related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use, the references to policy instruments addressing other SCP impact areas are rather scarce, thus calling for the enhancement of the environmental components of national tourism policies. Interestingly, most of the instruments found are either of voluntary or regulatory nature.

Digging deeper, references to action plans specifying implementation procedures for national tourism policies were found in 79% of the policies reviewed. In other words, there is a good level of awareness among tourism policymakers of the need to ensure that policies are implemented. References to the development of mechanisms to monitor the impacts of sustainable tourism are commonly found in national tourism policies with almost every document reviewed highlighting the importance of monitoring (95%).

The majority of documents reviewed (56%) also reference the need to monitor the environmental aspects of sustainable tourism development. However, there is limited evidence available profiling tourism impacts. Publicly available information mainly relates to the sector’s economic performance, with very few countries disclosing data related to environmental aspects. Following up on this point, Mr. Dirk Glaesser noted the research also analysed official NTA websites to search for publicly available progress reports related to policy implementation, or information on sector performance from the perspective of environmental sustainability. In this regard, progress reports directly related to the implementation of policies were available from only 7% of the national policies reviewed. While only 4% of the reviewed reports include information on the progress achieved in implementing areas related to environmental sustainability: the main focus of these documents relates to the description of the execution of budgetary lines.

Additionally, Mr. Dirk Glaesser indicated that broader reports and other official sources such as national tourism annual reports, figures related to tourism and annual assessments of the tourism situation containing information on sector performance were found for 34% of the countries whose national tourism policies were reviewed. 8% include references to environmental sustainability. Thus, Mr. Dirk Glaesser noted it is possible to find initial evidence related to the implementation of environmental sustainability components for only 11% of the national policies reviewed. Overall, the findings confirm the predominance of the economic angle and highlight a need to make evidence available on the wider impacts of tourism – notably its environmental sustainability – with a view to enhancing governmental accountability for the implementation of national tourism policies.

Although research findings suggest the existence of an implementation gap between national tourism policies and action on the ground, the limited evidence available does not allow for a conclusive statement in this regard. In conclusion, Dr. Dirk Glaesser emphasized the research
aims to inspire and encourage stakeholders to advance the implementation of the SDGs through sustainable tourism by recommending five strategic approaches, namely:

1. Use the SDGs as a compass to define tourism policy objectives as it can have catalytic effects that go beyond political cycles and lead to stronger collaboration with other government branches. Also, considering the crosscutting nature of SCP, prioritising SDG 12 can boost the sector’s contribution to the SDGs;

2. Outline SCP policy instruments to pave the way towards policy implementation. Choosing the right mix of instruments can enhance coordination mechanisms between tourism and environmental authorities as well as national and subnational levels of government, it also helps to clearly define pathways for implementation;

3. Support the regular and timely measurement of SCP to ensure effective implementation as the limited availability of data on the sector’s environmental impacts represents a significant challenge in terms of accelerating sustainability and resource efficiency. Establishing tourism observatories can help with this agenda;

4. Incorporate geospatial data to visualise how tourism interacts with the environment and help define baseline status to reinforce the environmental components of tourism policies; and

5. Embrace other innovative approaches, including circularity as an SCP enabler. The circular economy approach focusses on eco-design and the responsible use of materials to eventually achieve zero waste. It requires robust measurement and monitoring of impacts of economic activities and a constant rethinking and optimizing of performance through the use of technology and innovation. Moving away from traditional value chain relations and adapting more circular production and consumption patterns can accelerate the sector’s sustainability and represent a transformation process that is key for the sector.
Dialogue participants

Moderator: Mr. Paul Rogers
UNWTO Consultant

Keynote presentation: Dr. Dirk Glaesser
Director, Department for Sustainable Development of Tourism, UNWTO

Panellists:

Dr. Dirk Glaesser
Director, Department for Sustainable Development of Tourism, UNWTO

Mr. Karma Tshering
Council Member, Tourism Council of Bhutan and Founder of Bhutan Sustainable Tourism Society

Mr. Yoshinori OCHI
Secretary-General, Japan Association of Travel Agents

Mr. Kashi Raj Bhandari
Senior Director, Nepal Tourism Board

Mr. Kiyeon Kim
Program Analyst, Inclusive Economic Growth, UNDP Nepal

Mr. Masaru Takayama
Founder and Chair, Asian Ecotourism Network

Objectives and conclusions

The panel session supported the objectives of the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme which aims to enhance the sustainable development impacts of the tourism sector by 2030, by developing, promoting and scaling up sustainable consumption and production practices as set forth by SDG 12 and in connection with other goals such as SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15 on climate and marine and terrestrial resources respectively. To prepare for the dialogue the participants were asked to consider four sets of issues, namely:

1. National Parks and Protected Areas are generally sensitive areas that require special measures not only to encourage but enforce SCP. How have tourism threats to these areas changed over the last five years and what advocacy, monitoring and certification policy tools and instruments have been applied to successfully promote SCP? For example, how have private sector sustainability practices improved in protected areas over the last five years and what key challenges need to be addressed in the future?

2. To what extent, where and how are intergovernmental coordination or capacity building interventions to encourage SCP being used and applied in the panellist’s countries? For example, how has the Travelife programme benefited tour operators, hoteliers and the wider industry in Nepal?
3. To what extent, where and how are the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's industry and destination criteria being used and applied in the panellist’s countries? For example, in Japan to encourage SCP by tour operators, what advocacy and certification programmes are being taken up by JATA members?

4. Other sustainable consumption and production aspects beyond biodiversity such as water, waste, energy and greenhouse gases could also be addressed.

This session discussion helped inform conference participants on possible solutions and pathways to mainstreaming sustainable consumption and production practices in the tourism sector. It highlighted and reviewed issues and trends that are driving innovation and good practice, discussed capacity building and investment needs to replicate and upscale good practice, as well as identified unsustainable practices that should be addressed as a matter of priority. Main conclusions reached by the panel session included:

- Tourism is an activity that is relevant to and cuts across each of the 17 SDGs. The SDGs should be used to define tourism policy objectives and SDG 12, with its focus upon SCP, can boost the entire sector’s contribution to global sustainability.
- The implementation of SCP-related policies can best be achieved through the strategic and coherent design and application of policy instruments. A mix of financial incentives, laws and regulation, advocacy/voluntary processes and government action are needed, which require regular monitoring to assess progress towards clearly defined objectives.
- Institutional synergies coupled with widespread and multifaceted SCP-related training, education and capacity building are needed at all levels among public, private and destination community stakeholders to achieve SCP.
- On-going measuring and monitoring of the effective implementation of national policies and initiatives are also critically important to catalyze transformational practices and sustainable development through tourism.
Dr. Karma Tshering began by emphasizing the substantial growth of visitor numbers to Bhutan between 1974 with just 287 arrivals and 2018 with some 275,000 arrivals. He also drew attention to the slight change in the tag line from the original “High Value – Low Volume” to the more recent “High Value – Low Impact”, and emphasized four key guiding principles to ensure sustainability, including SCP, in tourism development, namely:

1. Developing high value not only in terms of revenue generation but in also delivering enriching experiences through uniqueness and authenticity, and quality services;
2. Promoting low impact by minimizing negative sociocultural and environmental impacts through promotion of good practices, safeguards and standards;
3. Delivering tangible and demonstrable benefits to host communities, nature conservation and cultural preservation; and
4. Advocating education and awareness to visitors and host to understand, appreciate and support conservation of the natural and cultural heritage.

As the industry has grown, while these guiding principles continue to be the fundamentally important pillars that guide sector sustainability, Dr. Tshering noted challenges have arisen with changes to the visitor markets and the needs and impacts of these different markets. In particular, attention was drawn to the recent high growth in non-tariff paying regional visitors that currently account for around 75% of the total visitor market and are able to travel, for example, without the use of tour guides to facilitate host-guest interaction.

Focussing upon efforts to promote SCP, Dr. Tshering noted that Bhutan’s current five-year plan prioritises tourism as a flagship programme, with a new position statement to “Take Tourism to the Top”. To help deliver on sustainability and the SDGs, special attention is being directed towards: waste management; green hotel guidelines (aligned with GSTC standards); community-based tourism development; industry capacity building through programmes such as Travelife; and, the Bhutan for Life initiative that is committed to sustain the flow of funds to finance Bhutan’s protected area system (that covers approximately 51% of the country’s land area).
Mr. Yoshinori Ochi opened his remarks by highlighting the growing importance of the tourism sector to Japan’s efforts to promote sustainable development, and the inclusion of a tourism ministers’ meeting in the forthcoming G20 meetings in Japan. With the sector envisaged to expand year on year, the country, and the Japanese Association of Travel Agents (JATA), are placing growing importance on sustainability issues including those related to SCP. To encourage sustainability across the sector and also in the context of national progress towards achieving the SDGs, Mr. Yoshinori Ochi referenced five JATA initiatives and priorities that are shaping sector development.

Recognizing that sustainability across the tourism sector is everyone’s responsibility, high attention is being directed towards the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. Mr. Yoshinori Ochi alluded to efforts being taken to ensure JATA’s members are familiar with the code and, through JATA activities, trained in its application.

Following the 2011 devastating earthquake and tsunami that hit the east coast of Japan, and after inevitable initial decline in visitor numbers, the tourism sector has recovered well over the last five years demonstrating the sector’s resilience and ability to support destination communities. The recovery drive, with an emphasis upon sustainability needs, has been a main focus of JATA’s work over recent years.

To help achieve the Government’s target of 40 million visitors by 2020, Mr. Yoshinori Ochi flagged the importance of accessible tourism for all. He talked of the importance of ensuring countries and destinations have infrastructure and human resources in place to welcome all types of visitors, and emphasized that SCP policies and practices relate equally to all types and visitor markets.

To address growing issues related to “overtourism”, Mr. Yoshinori Ochi pointed out that Japan has launched a survey on the topic that seeks to gather local the views and opinions of local residents on the phenomena and seek workable solutions in partnership with them. Initial strategies offering solutions include creating a demand for off-season travel and diversifying the product offering to encourage visitors to frequent less visited destinations.

To help achieve the Government’s target of 40 million visitors by 2020, Mr. Yoshinori Ochi referenced Japan’s Tourism Expo 2019 including its focus upon sustainability issues, which is growing year on year.

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In his opening remarks, Mr. Kiyeon Kim referenced that while SDG 8, SDG 12 and SDG 14 refer specifically to tourism it is clear to all practitioners that each of the goals have high sector relevance. Building on this point, he offered the view that:

- SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger) and SDG3 (good health and well-being) can be accomplished through tourism development and its impact on local economics;
- SDG 4 (quality education) is absolutely critical to the tourism sector to provide quality services and product content;
- SDG 5 (gender equality) can be developed and reinforced through fair and equal opportunity to training, employment and product development;
- SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and 7 (affordable and clean energy) are basic and important services in the tourism industry, which can generate income and investment including through tourism taxation to make such services available to poor and marginalized communities as it has done in the mountains of Nepal;
- SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) are primary outcomes by about by tourism development;
- SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) are key components are requisites for tourism development; and,
- SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 15 (life on land), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions and SDG 17 (partnership for the goals) are all goals where responsible and sustainable tourism development can contribute to their attainment.

Viewed in this way, Mr. Kiyeon Kim noted tourism is a comprehensive able to support all SDGs. Focussing on the objectives of the session, he alluded to the focus to SDG 12 and affirmed the view that the adoption of SCP practices can play a significant role in accelerating a global shift towards sustainability. To do so, he added that it is important to develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts especially as regards job creation, promoting local culture and related products. Mr. Kiyeon Kim drew attention to two key words from the core sentences of SDG 12, namely “patterns” and “local”.

Mr. Kiyeon Kim suggested it is possible to miss out on the importance of the word patterns and noted there’s an obvious reason to embrace the word ‘pattern’ in SDG 12, as patterns imply consistency and regularity, stating we only call processes patterns when elements are repeated in a predictable manner. As processes can be standardised and recognized as patterns when they’re repeated many times, every tourism project could work to ensure it produces SCP patterns of sustainable tourism. The second word local is the part that UNDP Nepal highlights. For
development of sustainable tourism that promotes local products and cultures, we should mobilise local natural resources. Thus, UNDP has undertaken research and, with its partners, designed tourism-led local development projects by working and meeting with around 70 stakeholders including local governments, local investors, the private sector, NGOs and associations of hotel and restaurants and come up with implementing programmes on certain areas. All this is possible because Nepal is an attractive touristic country that values distinctive local cultures and wants to conserve its beautiful natural resources. Mr. Kiyeon Kim concluded by emphasizing that Nepal has been successful in preserving its local resources by maximizing the use of local products in cities and mountain areas. In rural and urban settings, tourism activity is organized by local people to promote local characteristics, which make patterns of sustainable tourism and contributes towards the attainment of each of the SDGs as outlined in his opening remarks.

Building on these contributions, Mr. Kashi Raj Bhandari talked through the emergence and continuing importance of homestays and community-based tourism as examples of SCP in Nepal, from its emergence in the trekking areas of Annapurna, Everest and Langtang to dozens more sites and destinations across the country today. While acknowledging specific examples have not always been sustainable in the past, he explained how conservation partnerships have worked hard to address key challenges and strengthen management systems – both institutional and on the part of SMEs – to deliver improved models and approaches today. Examples of this include the buffer zone legislation for Nepal’s that ensures a large percentage of protected area entry fees are recycled and reinvested in, for example, waste management, alternative energy and income generation schemes that reduce household dependence on natural resources such as trees and juniper at higher altitudes.
Mr. Masaru Takayama opened with a brief introduction to the Asian Ecotourism Network (AEN), citing its head office in Thailand and satellite offices in Japan, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia. As a member of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), AEN has supported the delivery of numerous trainings that focus upon the concepts and approaches of SCP by tour operators, companies and accommodation providers, as well as the management practices of ecotourism destinations. Trainings have been delivered to private sector representatives, as well as local government officers, NGO staff and community representatives. Through these trainings examples of best practice approaches to SCP are shared widely with industry stakeholders. To help promote its work, AEN is actively involved in convening Ecotourism Travel Marts and conferences, such as was recently convened in Taiwan Province of China in January 2019 and will be convened in the Philippines in September 2020.

With international visitor arrivals increasing year on year and “overtourism” becoming a growing industry concern in many destinations, Mr. Masaru Takayama referenced the need for tourism stakeholders to build an in-depth understanding of issues surrounding SCP and to take responsibility for their implementation at the destination and business operation levels. AEN shares information among its members encouraging them to support and participate in the delivery of trainings to strengthen SCP practices.

Mr. Masaru Takayama recognized that the challenges of SCP are considerable and that they can best be addressed by stakeholders working in close partnership. Moreover, conferences and trainings provide an excellent platform to raise awareness and encourage the types of cooperation needed to bring about desirable change. Asia has lots of good examples of best practice ecotourism and the AEN is working hard to celebrate these models and encourage other businesses to follow suit. As a member of the GSTC, AEN and its members regularly contribute to the refinement of the GSTC criteria and work as resource persons and GSTC authorized trainers. While much work needs to be done linking GSTC trainings and setting regional ecotourism standards to support management systems that promote SCP, this is an important task and it will serve the collective interests of the tourism industry.

1 See: www.asianecotourism.org.
Panel session 2 addressed the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and its ability to advance a holistic approach to sustainable development. The session highlighted opportunities for sustainable tourism to promote more inclusive, equitable and balanced approaches to development. The session discussed topics covering the pillars and domains of GNH and informed conference participants on possible solutions and pathways to sustainability. It highlighted and reviewed innovative approaches that underpin good practice, discussed capacity building and investment needs to upscale good practice, as well as identified unsustainable practices that should be addressed as a matter of priority.

In his opening keynote, Mr. Paul Rogers began by emphasizing the current reliance on economic data to measure tourism performance, be it through visitor numbers, their spending, levels of industry investment, tourism-related employment or a visitor’s length of stay. While these measures are important, tourism as a system is about something far greater than income generation and its economic contribution to Gross Domestic Product. The value of environmental education through tourism, as well as social exchanges through community-based tourism, cultural tourism, gastronomy tourism and voluntourism, for example, contribute hugely towards personal and spiritual needs for individual and collective sustenance and growth. Despite UNWTO and other organizations publishing widely on tourism as a vehicle for development, there remains a dependence on monetary and supply-chain analysis as primary measures of tourism development.

While noting economic indicators are important, Mr. Paul Rogers added that it’s refreshing and inspiring to examine Bhutan’s approach to defining an alternative pathway to development with its concept of GNH. While many people are aware of Bhutan’s “High Value – Low Impact” approach to tourism, relatively few people are aware Bhutan inspired a 2011 UN Resolution on “Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development”. As a result, the happiness and wellbeing agenda is attracting growing attention from corporates and governments around the world, including the United Arab Emirates with its annual World Government Summits1 and their Global Dialogue on Happiness2 and New Zealand that recently passed its first Wellbeing Budget3. As all participants here today recognize that tourism can make a major contribution to each of the SDGs, are there innovative ways we can work together to advance our collective interests as sustainable tourism planners and managers? Can we learn from Bhutan by applying the concept of GNH to destination planning in a way that helps us achieve the SDGs and at the same time move us beyond GDP?

1 See: www.worldgovernmentsummit.org.
2 See: www.worldgovernmentsummit.org/initiatives/forums.
Mr. Paul Rogers went on to present Planet Happiness, a big data non-profit project initiated in August 2018 to measure the happiness and wellbeing of residents living in World Heritage sites. The project has two aims:

- The first relates to tourism and sustainability. It focusses on our understanding of the impact of tourism on the wellbeing of host communities in World Heritage sites. It aims to highlight and strengthen the relationship between tourism and the wellbeing of host communities.
- The second aim is to deliver a high impact media campaign that raises global awareness and participation in the GNH and “Beyond GDP” agenda.

Planet Happiness is achieving its purpose by deploying the Happiness Index survey, an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recognized best practice approach to subjectively measuring happiness and wellbeing. The online survey, available in 21 languages, takes around 15 minutes to complete. The target audience for the survey are residents within and immediately around World Heritage sites. The survey asks questions across 11 happiness domains (community, environment, access to life-long learning the arts and culture, satisfaction with life, psychological wellbeing, government, health, standard of living, social support, time-balance and work).

Figure 1 Personal Happiness Score-card across eleven domains of happiness


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4 See: [www.ourheritageourhappiness.org](http://www.ourheritageourhappiness.org).

As illustrated in figures 1 and 2, one-page score cards contrast individual and destination scores, with all other survey-takers. When domains are stacked from low to high (figure 3) the results identify the strengths and deficiencies of destination wellbeing. The one-page score cards together with more in-depth reporting can be used as a bridge for dialogue between local communities, governments and the private sector to design and implement interventions to strengthen destination wellbeing. Iterative use and deployment of the Happiness Index can measure the success of interventions and keep track of destination wellbeing over time. By sharing results and learnings between destinations and using media strategies (local, national and international), webinars and conferences, solutions to “overtourism” and approaches to more inclusive and responsible destination planning can be shared between sites.

**Figure 2** Early destination Score-card for Bali, Indonesia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happiness index domains</th>
<th>Average all survey taker scores</th>
<th>Average Labuan, Bali</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>47.36</td>
<td>58.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>62.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>44.60</td>
<td>61.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
<td>55.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological well-being</td>
<td></td>
<td>61.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with life</td>
<td></td>
<td>58.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td></td>
<td>63.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard of living-economy</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time balance</td>
<td>47.07</td>
<td>51.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
<td>55.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Labuan, Bali
132 people finished the Survey in Bali.
A score between: 80-100 is very happy. 60-80 is happy. 40-60 is neutral.
Overall, for the 132 people who completed the Happiness Index from Labuan, Happiness Index are higher.
Areas with high scores can be areas for building on strengths.
Areas with low score can be areas for addressing potential or actual problems.

Planet Happiness is currently working in twelve pilot sites in Asia, Europe and Africa and is in dialogue with another 20 to 30 destination management organizations, universities and corporates to embrace other countries and destinations around the world. Project data is open source and
available to destination communities, journalists, local and national governments, the private sector, universities and their students. Partnership MOUs have been signed with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), a series of universities and the Thai Government’s Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) as Planet Happiness’ first government partner. The project welcomes interest from and engagement with additional partners to embrace new sites and work towards the global aims of finding innovative solutions to “overtourism”, and raising an international awareness of the happiness agenda. Thereby helping us achieve the SDGs and move “beyond GDP”.

Figure 3  Strengths and deficiencies in destination wellbeing, Bali, Indonesia

For the 132 who took the survey in Bali, scores are high in Psychological well-being, Environment and Satisfaction with life.
Scores are lowest in Lifelong learning, Time balance and Community.
Scores may be used to explore how to increase low domains through activities in domains where scores are high.
100 is the highest possible.

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6 See: Pacific Asia Travel Association: www.pata.org;
Global Sustainable Tourism Council: www.gstcouncil.org; and
Thai Government’s Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration: www.dasta.or.th.
Dialogue participants

Moderator:  
Ms. Pema Choden Tenzin  
Founder and CEO of Yeeyong Magazine, Bhutan

Keynote presentation:  
Mr. Paul Rogers  
UNWTO Expert

Panellists:  
Mr. Paul Rogers  
UNWTO Expert

Mr. Benito Jr. Bengzon  
Deputy Minister, Department of Tourism, Philippines

Dasho Karma Tshiteem  
Former Chairperson, Royal Civil Service Commission, Bhutan

Mr. Jeff Smith  
Vice President, Sustainability, Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas

Mr. Brent Hyde  
General Manager, Zhiwaling Hotel, Paro

Objectives and conclusions

The panel session addressed the philosophy of GNH and its ability to advance a holistic approach to sustainable development. The session highlighted the role of sustainable tourism development towards an inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth. To prepare for the discussion, panellists were asked to consider four sets of issues, namely:

1. Building on Bhutan’s tourism tariff and its unique approach to “High-Value – Low-Volume” tourism, what additional and specific GNH-related policy tools and instruments are being applied to the tourism sector in Bhutan, and how have such practices promoted greater sustainability and alignment with the four main pillars of Gross National Happiness?

2. What has happened since the 2011 signing of the UN Resolution on “Happiness: Towards a Holistic Approach to Development” to spread international awareness of and participation in the happiness agenda and wellbeing movement?  
   Who are the main actors and agencies engaged with this agenda, and which countries are talking definitive steps to implement happiness and well-being policies and plans?

3. How important is the measurement of Happiness as an indicator of development?  
   How might tourism sector stakeholders benefit from a better understanding the philosophy of Gross National Happiness and how can the four main pillars and their domains help promote sustainability in the tourism sector?

4. What role can the UNWTO play to develop and support opportunities for GNH policies and practices to promote a more holistic approach to tourism development and greater sustainability in the sector?
The session discussion enabled the exchange of views and experiences on applying sustainability principles and policy instruments for sustainable tourism development related to the four main pillars of GNH. It explored government and private sector initiatives that place high value on the philosophy and approach of GNH. Main conclusions reached by the panel session included:

- Globally, there is growing interest in the happiness and wellbeing movement on the part of governments, individuals, businesses and civil society organizations. This interest embraces what it takes for communities and societies, as well as individuals to “be happy” and strengthen their collective wellbeing.

- While tourism is a vehicle for development, sustainable tourism is about more than the economic value of the sector. For host communities, besides quality employment opportunities, sustainable tourism development must direct attention towards, for example, the quality of the local environment, promoting safe neighbourhoods and communities, enjoying access to the arts and new learning opportunities, and having trust in governance structures.

- By deploying the Happiness Index survey among host communities in visitor destinations and measuring their collective wellbeing across 11 domains of happiness, one-page score cards and more detailed survey reports can be used by tourism stakeholders to design interventions that aim to strengthen the relationship between tourism development and the wellbeing of the host community.

- Governments and tourism businesses in particular have a responsibility to:
  - Understand how tourism development is changing the lifestyles and environment of destination communities;
  - Take steps to listen to the needs and wishes of host communities; and
  - Adopt planning and management approaches that seek to minimise and eliminate negative impacts and to work with host communities to strengthen destination wellbeing.
Mr. Benito Jr. Bengzon began by referencing the Philippines’ branding tag-line, “It’s More Fun in the Philippines” likening its connectivity to happiness and wellbeing values. He talked of the importance of tourism as a vehicle for development that values the environment, as well as the social and cultural characteristics of a destination, and noted the strong international reputation of the Philippines with its warm and friendly people. He added support to the view that tourism development should provide a range of benefits to destination communities, not just income and employment but also, for example, better access to quality education and healthcare. In areas of the Philippines that have become popular as tourist destinations, we can see that improvements have been made in many areas to the delivery of social services. It is important to recognize and strengthen opportunities for tourism to support the happiness of destination communities.

Mr. Benito Jr. Bengzon went on to acknowledge the closing of Boracay Island to tourists in 2018 was perhaps a mistake. He suggested more might have been done initially to recognize and measure the negative impacts of tourism in the first place and that stakeholders could have worked together to address challenges before they came too serious. Learning lessons from this situation Mr. Benito Jr. Bengzon stated that systems had been put in place to consult more widely with stakeholders and invest in measures such as improved waste management to ensure the destination does not close to visitors again.

On a personal level, Mr. Benito Jr. Bengzon stated his interest in and support for GNH as an approach to development and an alternative to GDP. He also recognized the importance of the GSTC destination criteria in promoting sustainability and noted how his Government would be using the criteria, as well as other ASEAN standards to strengthen the way the Philippines manages the tourism sector and its visitor destinations. He acknowledged the importance of the tourism sector to the Philippines and the commitment of the Government to promoting sustainability, and suggested these and other measures would continue to ensure that tourism will always be More Fun in the Philippines!
Dasho Karma Tshiteem provided the conference with an overview of the origins of GNH, its four pillars, its purpose as a development goal, policy tools being employed to ensure the pursuit of GNH and gave examples of indicators used as measurements under each of the nine domains. He began by pointing out His Majesty the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck is the author and founder of GNH when he declared “GNH is more important than Gross National Product”. Building on this statement government policymakers subsequently identified nine GNH Domains (see table I.1) and accompanying goals for the government to deliver to its people. The four domains and examples of what they mean in practice include:

1. **Sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development**: free universal primary education and healthcare, poverty reduction and rapid rural infrastructure development.
2. **Conservation of the environment**: maintain 60% of country under forest cover, over 50% of country designated as protected areas, high environmental safeguards through environmental impact assessment (EIA).
3. **Preservation and promotion of culture**: promotion of national language, dress, architecture, games, promotion of traditional festivals, arts and crafts, etc.
4. **Good governance**: decentralization and empowerment, improving performance of three tiers of government: fighting corruption, promotion of media, introduction of television and the Internet.

Following the enthronement of His Majesty the Fifth King and Bhutan’s movement to become a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy, a series of steps were set in place to ensure the country’s pursuit of GNH. These included:

- The creation of a GNH Index;
- The creation of a GNH Commission;
- GNH surveys to monitor progress; and,
- GNH policy screening tools to ensure GNH enhancing policies, including a GNH for Business certification tool.

As an example, the purpose of the GNH Index is to:

- Set a framework for Bhutan’s development;
- Provide indicators to gauge and guide development; and
- Measure progress over time.

Building on this introduction, Dasho Karma Tshiteem went on to give examples among the 33 indicators that are used to measure progress and change among the nine domains. These include, for example:

- Cultural diversity and resilience (language skills, artistic skills, sociocultural participation);
- Community vitality (social support, community-relationships, family-relationships, victim of crime);
- Time use (working hours, sleeping hours); and
- Psychological wellbeing (life satisfaction, emotional balance, spirituality).
In conclusion, Dasho Karma Tshiteem noted that GNH can be viewed as a cyclical system whereby the GNH Index:

– Provides a true measure of progress and compass to guide development;
– Serves to prioritise resource allocation, and defines policies and programmes; and
– Influences individuals, the private sector, civil society organizations, communities and society at large.

He noted, more information could be found at www.grossnationalhappiness.com and www.gnhc.gov.bt.
Mr. Jeff Smith introduced himself and Six Senses’ with the company’s vision of “Helping people reconnect with themselves, others and the world around them” and noted these were values that could be linked to the philosophy of GNH. He then gave an overview of the company’s many properties and spas around the world, mainly across Asia, the Middle-East, North Africa and Europe, and alluded to the six properties Six Senses is opening in Bhutan. He added the company was extremely pleased to be positioning itself in Bhutan as it’s able to relate whole heartedly to the philosophy of GNH, which he believes are expressed in the Six Senses business model.

Mr. Jeff Smith referenced the three main features of Six Senses’ sustainable operations or, in other words, its management framework that consists of action plans, audits and sustainable operations guidelines. The latter embracing all aspects of property business, including: front office, kitchens, food and beverage; housekeeping; engineering; landscaping; purchasing; experiences; marketing and communications; human resources; and reporting requirements. Within this business model, each Six Senses property raises funding to support local environmental and community projects. Funds are raised through 0.5% of the property’s revenue, 50% of water sales, 100% of soft toy sales and 100% of donations received. Mr. Jeff Smith went on to note that it is in conversation with Planet Happiness and is looking to support the deployment of the Happiness Index in communities in and around Dujiangyan and the Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries at Mountain Siguniang Jiajin Mountains World Heritage sites in China, where it has a property.

Through the above actions and strategies Six Senses seeks to instil in its staff and visitors a deep respect for the environment and destination communities where its properties are located. More than this, it recognizes that partnerships are needed at all industry and destination levels to achieve the truly worthy ideals and concepts of GNH and the SDGs.
Having lived and worked in Bhutan for many years, Mr. Brent Hyde introduced the concept and business approach of the Zhiwaling Hotel, emphasizing unique design features and giving examples of management systems adopted by the company. Turning more broadly to challenges currently facing Bhutan’s tourism sector, Mr. Brent Hyde referenced the four GNH pillars and noted future development should be measured along the lines of potential growth in business and happiness. He supposed more is not always better as the guest experience will likely be diluted not simply because of visitor volume, but more importantly due to changes in Bhutanese character and lifestyle caused by over-crowding and the changing expectations of the Bhutanese, including through exposure to easy money from generous tips, donations and other sources of side-income unrelated to the tourism experience. Every potential opportunity to expand the visitor economy should follow GNH guidelines and principles to ensure the broadest ‘prosperity of happiness’ for the Bhutanese people, rather than simply promoting gains in wealth that are beyond fair and reasonable profit.

Mr. Brent Hyde, noted that development of better infrastructure for local communities, as well as for marginalised areas and guests to the country is a priority. Bhutan has an infrastructure that’s barely sufficient for the 800,000 population. If you add an additional 400,000 tourists per year the infrastructure can fail or be severely stretched. Following the four pillars, especially ‘good governance and protection’, and developing traditions and culture, will help ensuring a stable infrastructure for the Bhutanese people, as well as an infrastructure that can withstand incremental visitor growth. Burdening Bhutan with any volume of visitors only burdens the people and the environment along with social, government infrastructure systems. Protecting the environment through well-planned development is essential. This also fits with sustainable social development, an essential ingredient to ensure balanced social development where all sectors of the community get a near equal share of any growth. Growth must benefit the people and country and not a select few.

Mr. Brent Hyde was very keen to point out that following sustainable practices in all tourism sectors does not mean huge investments for companies. All tourist related businesses should be educated in sustainability systems and practices to protect the environment, just as advocated earlier with the focussed discussion on SCP issues. For Bhutan, this will help to keep the country’s unique selling proposition (USP) as a tourism destination, enabling Bhutan to be an international leader in sustainability through actions and not words. Everyone in Bhutan can be a contributor to this as it goes beyond waste, water and energy – it is a philosophy that is centred around their four pillars of GNH, which the Bhutanese people know so well.
Conference conclusions and recommendations

The conference theme of Sustainable Development through Tourism with its focus upon the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and in particular SDG 12 (panel session 1) and the concept of Gross National Happiness (panel session 2), provided a useful framework to review a wide range of sustainability challenges confronting the sector, as well as priority pathways to address these challenges.

Consistent with the findings of the UNWTO and UN Environment Baseline Report on the Integration of Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns into Tourism Policies, the high-level dialogue confirmed high-awareness and strong commitment by the speakers to sustainability principles, policies and practice. The main conclusions reached by the high-level dialogue included:

- Tourism, while having a diverse and multifaceted footprint, is fundamentally an industry about people and places and the relationships between them. To promote sustainable production and consumption, host and guest interactions are about more than economic exchange. Interactions between them necessitate mutual respect and a shared responsibility to care for the destination, its people and their environment.

- Tourism is an expanding industry. Its development entails a constant assessment of positive and negative impacts and the refinement of policy and practice to ensure host communities and their environment are among the industry’s primary beneficiaries. The greater the engagement and collective happiness and wellbeing of the host community, the greater the likelihood of avoiding issues of “overtourism”.

- The path to sustainability in tourism-related production and consumption is closely associated with: research; policy design and implementation; advocacy; training, education and capacity-building; identifying performance indicators; certification; and monitoring and evaluation. Issues related to engaging host communities and their business associations in policy, planning and management processes and reducing the sector’s carbon footprint are among the most pressing issues to address. Stakeholder partnerships to address challenges are fundamental to success.

Given the broad footprint of the tourism sector and its wide range of industry stakeholders, the importance of emphasizing collective responsibility to promote responsible growth and greater SCP was clearly stated. Further, it was also underlined that collective responsibility must focus upon ensuring host communities, and their environment are among the primary beneficiaries of tourism activity. Similarly, participants emphasized greater attention and effort must be directed towards monitoring policy implementation, and that performance indicators are critical to success. Performance indicators should extend beyond economic data to embrace environmental

and social performance indicators. While greater take-up of certification schemes by tourism-related businesses to monitor and strengthen environmental performance is a very valuable and accessible approach to improving SCP, additional measures are needed which were discussed through the course of panel session 1. Meanwhile, panel session 2 looked at opportunities to strengthen the social and wider societal (host community-related) benefits and performance of the sector to encourage greater sustainability.

In the concluding comments of his keynote address, Dr. Dirk Glaesser summarised the main recommendations of the UNWTO and UN Environment Baseline Report, drawing strong attention to the need to:

– Use the SDGs as a compass to define tourism policy objectives as it can have catalytic effects that go beyond political cycles and lead to a stronger collaboration with other government branches. Also considering the cross-cutting nature of SCP, prioritising SDG 12 can boost the sector’s contribution to the SDGs;

– Outline SCP policy instruments to pave the way towards policy implementation. Choosing the right mix of instruments can enhance coordination mechanisms between tourism and environmental authorities, as well as national and subnational levels of government. It also helps to clearly define pathways for implementation;

– Support the regular and timely measurement of SCP to ensure effective implementation as the limited availability of data on the sector’s environmental impacts represents a significant challenge in terms of accelerating sustainability and resource efficiency. Establishing tourism observatories can help with this agenda;

– Incorporate geospatial data to visualise how tourism interacts with the environment and help define baseline status to reinforce the environmental components of tourism policies; and

– Embrace other innovative approaches, including circularity as an SCP enabler. The circular economy approach focusses on eco-design and the responsible use of materials to eventually achieve zero waste. It requires robust measurement and monitoring of impacts of economic activities and a constant rethinking and optimising of performance through the use of technology and innovation. Moving away from traditional value chain relations and adapting more circular production and consumption patterns can accelerate the sector’s sustainability and represent a transformation process that is key for the sector.

Building upon these recommendations, the main conclusions of the SCP focussed panel session 1 discussion were:

– Tourism is an activity that is relevant to and cuts across each of the 17 SDGs. The SDGs should be used to define tourism policy objectives and SDG 12, with its focus upon SCP, can boost the entire sector’s contribution to global sustainability.

– The implementation of SCP-related policies can best be achieved through the strategic and coherent design and application of policy instruments. A mix of financial incentives, laws and regulation, advocacy/voluntary processes and government action are needed, which require regular monitoring to assess progress towards clearly defined objectives.

– Institutional synergies coupled with widespread and multifaceted SCP-related training, education and capacity building are needed at all levels among public, private and destination community stakeholders to achieve SCP.

– On-going measuring and monitoring of the effective implementation of national policies and initiatives are also critically important to catalyze transformational practices and sustainable development through tourism.
Looking beyond SCP practices towards broader societal and host community happiness and wellbeing issues, the main conclusions of panel session 2 on Gross National Happiness through Tourism, were:

- Globally, there is a growing interest in the happiness and wellbeing movement on the part of governments, individuals, businesses and civil society organizations. This interest embraces what it takes for communities and societies, as well as individuals to “be happy” and strengthen their collective wellbeing.

- While tourism is a vehicle for development, sustainable tourism is about more than the economic value of the sector. For host communities, besides quality employment opportunities, sustainable tourism development must direct attention towards, for example, the quality of the local environment, promoting safe neighbourhoods and communities, enjoying access to the arts and new learning opportunities, and having trust in governance structures.

- By deploying the Happiness Index survey among host communities in visitor destinations and measuring their collective wellbeing across eleven domains of happiness, one-page score cards and more detailed survey reports can be used by tourism stakeholders to design interventions that aim to strengthen the relationship between tourism development and the wellbeing of the host community.

- Governments and tourism businesses in particular have a responsibility to:
  - Understand how tourism development is changing the lifestyles and environment of destination communities;
  - Take steps to listen to the needs and wishes of host communities; and
  - Adopt planning and management approaches that seek to minimise and eliminate negative impacts and to work with host communities to strengthen destination wellbeing.
Annex 1

Programme of the UNWTO Regional Conference on Sustainable Development through Tourism
Thimphu, Bhutan, 03 June 2019 (Taj Tashi Hotel)

Monday, 03 June 2019

08:30 – 10:00  Registration of the participants
10:00 – 10:30  Receiving of Hon’ble Prime Minister and guests with Chipdrel Procession (traditional reception)
               The Marchang ceremony at the courtyard of Taj Conference Hall

10:30 – 11:00  Opening Ceremony
               31st Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia,
               57th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for South Asia (CSA),
               53rd Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific (CAP) and
               UNWTO Regional Conference on Sustainable Development through Tourism
               (Venue: Sir Ugyen Dorji Hall)
               National Anthem, Zhabten, video presentation
               Welcome remarks by Mr. Dorji Dhradhul
               Director General, Tourism Council of Bhutan, Kingdom of Bhutan
               Congratulatory remarks by Her Excellency Ms. Debbie Mineichi Remengesau
               First Lady of the Republic of Palau
               Congratulatory remarks
               by the Chairman of the UNWTO Commission for South Asia (CSA)
               Opening remarks by Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili,
               Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
               Inauguration address by His Excellency Dr. Tanji Dorji,
               Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of
               His Excellency Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister, Kingdom of Bhutan

11:00 – 11:20  Group photo
               Coffee break

11:20 – 18:00  UNWTO Regional Conference on Sustainable Development through Tourism

11:20 – 13:00  High-level Dialogue

   The High-level Dialogue will address the policy and governance frameworks necessary to support
   the sustainable development of tourism, looking at steps that can be taken by both the public and
   the private sector during the planning, development and operational phases of tourism initiatives.
   It will look at the roles and responsibilities of both the public sector and the private sector, and
   explore how different governance instruments can be used to ensure that tourism makes an
   optimal contribution to all aspects of sustainability.
Introduction: Mr. Xu Jing  
Director, Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific, UNWTO

Moderator: Dr. Dirk Glaesser  
Director, Department for Sustainable Development of Tourism, UNWTO

Panellists: Mr. Dorji Dhradhul  
Director General, Tourism Council of Bhutan, Kingdom of Bhutan
Mr. Bob Loughman  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism and Trades, Vanuatu
Mr. Md. Mahbub Ali  
State Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Bangladesh
Mr. Ahmed Salih  
Minister of State for Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Maldives
Ms. Ni Wayan Giri Adnyani  
Deputy Minister for Industry and Institutional Development, Indonesia
Mr. Mohan Krishna Sapkota  
Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal
Mr. Suman Billa  
Joint Secretary, Ministry of State for Tourism, India
Mr. Siripala Hettiarachchi  
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism Development, Wildlife and Christian Religious Affairs, Sri Lanka
Mr. Jun Takashina  
Vice-Commissioner, Japan Tourism Agency
Ms. Bayasgalan Saranjav  
Director General, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia
Ms. Yaying Li  
Deputy Director-General, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, China
Ms. Maria Helena De Senna Fernandes  
Director, Macao Government Tourism Office
Dr. Mario Hardy  
CEO, PATA

13:00 – 15:00  Hospitality lunch hosted by the Provincial Government of Jeju Island, Republic of Korea

15:00 – 16:15  Panel session 1: SDGs, Sustainable Consumption and Production Through Tourism

Session 1 will provide an overview of the activities of UNWTO and other organizations on governance mechanism for sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and tourism. The invited speakers will share their expertise and experiences on the integration of sustainable consumption and production into tourism policies and cases of regional efforts in Asia and the Pacific. It will also highlight the important role of measuring and monitoring the effective implementation of national policies and initiatives and its potential to catalyze transformation and sustainable development through tourism.
Keynote presentation:  Dr. Dirk Glaesser  
Director, Department for Sustainable Development of Tourism, UNWTO

Moderator:  Mr. Paul Rogers  
UNWTO

Expert panellists:  Dr. Dirk Glaesser  
Director, Department for Sustainable Development of Tourism, UNWTO
Dr. Karma Tshering  
Council Member, Tourism Council of Bhutan and Founder of Bhutan Sustainable Tourism Society
Mr. Yoshinori OCHI  
Secretary-General, Japan Association of Travel Agents
Mr. Kashi Raj Bhandari  
Senior Director, Nepal Tourism Board
Mr. Kiyeon Kim  
Program Analyst, Inclusive Economic Growth, UNDP Nepal
Mr. Masaru Takayama  
Founder and Chair, Asian Ecotourism Network

16:15 – 16:45  Coffee break

16:45 – 17:45  Panel session 2:  
Gross National Happiness through Tourism

Session 2 will address the philosophy of Gross National Happiness to advance a holistic approach to sustainable development. The Session will highlight the role of sustainable tourism development towards an inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth. The invited panellists will exchange views and experiences on applying sustainability principles and policy instruments for sustainable tourism development related to the four main pillars of Gross National Happiness.

Keynote presentation:  Dr. Paul Rogers  
UNWTO Expert

Moderator:  Ms. Pema Choden Tenzin  
Founder and CEO of Yeeyong Magazine, Kingdom of Bhutan

Panellists:  Dr. Paul Rogers  
UNWTO Expert
Mr. Benito Jr. Bengzon  
Deputy Minister, Department of Tourism, Philippines
Dasho Karma Tshiteem  
Former Chairperson, Royal Civil Service Commission, Kingdom of Bhutan
Mr. Jeff Smith  
Vice President, Sustainability, Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas
Mr. Brent Hyde  
General Manager, Zhiwaling Hotel, Paro, Kingdom of Bhutan
17:45 – 18:00  **Closing session**

Technical Conclusions and Recommendations by **Dr. Paul Rogers**, UNWTO Expert

Closing remarks by **Mr. Zhu Shanzhong**
Executive Director, UNWTO

Closing remarks by **Mr. Dorji Dhradhul**
Director General, Tourism Council of Bhutan
Annex 2

Technical note
UNWTO Regional Conference on Sustainable Development through Tourism
Bhutan, 03 June 2019

1. Background

When responsibly planned and managed, tourism has demonstrated its capacity to support job creation, promote inclusive social integration, protect natural and cultural heritage, conserve biodiversity, generate sustainable livelihoods and improve human wellbeing. As the sector is experiencing tremendous growth, collective efforts to ensure its long-term sustainability are essential.

During the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2015, 154 heads of state or government adopted the bold and ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to, inter alia, – end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. Based on this universal, integrated and transformative vision, UNWTO is placing its efforts and tireless work in contributing to its technical assistance and capacity-building to the achievement of these global goals. UNWTO is working with governments, public and private partners, development banks, international and regional financial institutions, UN agencies and international organizations to help achieve the SDGs, placing a particular emphasis on Goals 8, 12 and 14, in which tourism is featured.

In line with the global effort in achieving the SDGs, UNWTO is committed to enhance the sustainable development impacts of the tourism sector by 2030, by developing, promoting and scaling up sustainable consumption and production practices as set forth by SDG 12. The One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme, led by UNWTO in collaboration with UN Environment, is a multi-stakeholder partnership that promotes networking among like-minded organizations and brings together existing and new initiatives focussed on decoupling tourism’s growth from the increased use of natural resources. It is recognized as an implementation mechanism for SDG 12 and reports officially to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on an annual basis. In addition to its work on SDG 12 with a view to boosting the efficient use of natural resources while producing less waste and addressing the challenges of climate change and biodiversity, the Programme has potential to advance other connected goals such as SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15 on climate and marine and terrestrial resources respectively.

As recognized by the UN General Assembly’s Resolution (A/RES/65/309) adopted in 2011, “happiness” can play an essential role to advance a holistic approach to development given its connection with the well-being of people and calling for an inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth complementary to sustainable consumption and production. In Bhutan, the philosophy of Gross National Happiness has been recognized as a development paradigm highlighting balanced growth on prosperity and happiness. For the government, it has facilitated the drive towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance, the ultimate reduction in the gap
between the rich and the poor and ensuring good governance and empowerment of her people as one of its key directives.¹ The four main pillars of Gross National Happiness are:

1. Equitable and sustainable socioeconomic development;
2. Preservation and promotion of the cultural and spiritual heritage;
3. Conservation of environment; and
4. Good governance.

As tourism leaders of Asia and the Pacific region come together for the 31st Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia, the Regional Conference provides an ideal platform to examine the effect of sustainable tourism development, and the link between the economic, social and environmental impact of tourism in destinations, and how this translates into governance arrangements in their respective countries.

2. Objectives

In the above context, the objectives of the Conference are:

– To raise awareness of the global effort in achieving SDGs and the important relationship between sustainable consumption and production in the tourism sector;
– To foster high-level commitments at both the regional and national levels to advance sustainable consumption and production in tourism in Asia and the Pacific;
– To understand how to plan, develop and implement national policies and initiatives to promote sustainable consumption and production in tourism in Asia and the Pacific;
– To acknowledge the important role of measurement and monitoring for the effective implementation of national policies and initiatives and its potential to catalyze transformation and sustainable development through tourism;
– To exchange views and experiences on applying sustainability principles and policy instruments for sustainable tourism development related to the four main pillars of Gross National Happiness; and
– To provide recommendations to the member states in Asia and the Pacific on strengthening their scientific capacity to implement and monitor sustainable consumption and production policies and initiatives.

3. Methodology

The conference will begin with a high-level dialogue among tourism leaders on how to maximize the contribution of tourism to sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific region looking at governance mechanisms that can be used in the planning, development and operational phase of tourism development.

This will be followed by two technical sessions composed of the following components:

– A Technical Session on the SDGs and sustainable consumption and production through tourism, including the keynote presentation on the integration of sustainable consumption and production into tourism policies and cases of regional efforts in Asia and the Pacific, followed by an Open Forum; and

– A Technical Session on sustainable tourism development, with a particular focus on initiatives on Gross National Happiness in Asia and the Pacific, followed by an Open Forum on that theme.

4. The participants

International participants are primarily from National Tourism Administrations and National Tourism Organizations from Asia and the Pacific, with selected representatives from other organizations dealing with tourism and sustainable development.

National participants will include national and local government officials dealing with tourism and environment, tourism industry members, universities and media.
Annex 3

List of participants
(18 June 2019)

UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific (CAP)
Member States

1. Cambodia
   Mr. Thong Rathasak
   Director General,
   Tourism Development and International Cooperation,
   Ministry of Tourism
   Lot 3A, Street 169, Sangkat Vealvong
   Khan 7 Makara
   Phnom-Penh
   Cambodia

   Mr. Chhiv Try
   Director,
   Department of International Cooperation and ASEAN (DICA),
   Director, National Committee for Tourism Professionals Secretariat,
   Ministry of Tourism
   Lot 3A, Street 169, Sangkat Vealvong
   Khan 7 Makara
   Phnom-Penh
   Cambodia

   Mr. Nak Chhun
   Advisor and Deputy Director,
   International Cooperation Department
   Ministry of Tourism
   Lot 3A, Street 169, Sangkat Vealvong
   Khan 7 Makara
   Phnom-Penh
   Cambodia

2. China
   Mr. Xiaofeng Wang
   Member of Ministerial Leadership,
   Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China
   No. 10 Chaoyangmen, North street
   Beijing
   China

   Ms. Yaying Li
   Deputy Director-General,
   Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China
   No. 10 Chaoyangmen, North street
   Beijing
   China

   Mr. Wu Gao
   Deputy Division Chief,
   Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China
   No. 10 Chaoyangmen, North street
   Beijing
   China

   Mr. Shangli Mao
   Officer,
   Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China
   No. 10 Chaoyangmen, North street
   Beijing
   China

   Ms. Yaohong Liu
   Officer,
   Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China
   No. 10 Chaoyangmen, North street
   Beijing
   China
Ms. Chen Hu  
Officer,  
Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China  
No. 10 Chaoyangmen, North street  
Beijing  
China

Ms. Jiang Xiao  
Director,  
China Cultural Center in Nepal,  
China National Tourism Office  
Kathmandu  
Narayan Gopal Chowk, Maharajgunj, Kathmandu  
Nepal

Mr. Wang Hejie  
Programme Manager,  
China Cultural Center in Nepal,  
China National Tourism Office, Kathmandu  
Narayan Gopal Chowk, Maharajgunj, Kathmandu  
Nepal

Mr. Wang Hejie  
Staff,  
China National Tourism Office  
P.O. Box 3639, Heritage Plaza II, Kamaladi,  
Kathmandu,  
Nepal

Ms. Yok Yee Yolinda Chan  
Consul General,  
Trade Commissioner,  
Consul General of the Republic of Fiji  
Room 2006, No. 1699 Gubei Rd. Minhang  
Shanghai

Ms. Jie Zhu  
Investment and Trade Manager of CG, office of Fiji in Shanghai,  
Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism  
Room 2006, No. 1699 Gubei Rd. Minhang,  
Shanghai

4. Indonesia

Mr. N.W. Giri Adnyani  
Deputy Minister for Industry and Institutional Relations,  
Ministry of Tourism  
Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat, 17  
Jakarta 10110  
Indonesia

Mr. Jubilar Paskoro  
Bilateral and Intergovernmental Organization, ASEAN, Australia, NZ and Oceania,  
International Relations Division,  
Ministry of Tourism  
Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat, 17  
Jakarta 10110  
Indonesia

Ms. Komang Ayu Ardinasari  
Official,  
Ministry of Tourism  
Jl. Medan Merdeka Barat, 17  
Jakarta 10110  
Indonesia

5. Japan

Mr. Jun Takashina  
Vice Commissioner,  
Japan Tourism Agency  
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT)  
2-1-2 Kasumigaseki  
Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-8919  
Japan

Ms. Akane Nakajima  
Chief Officer,  
Japan Tourism Agency  
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT)  
2-1-2 Kasumigaseki  
Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-8919  
Japan
6. Lao People’s Democratic Republic

Ms. Phonemaly Inthaphome  
Deputy Director General,  
Tourism Development Department,  
Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism  
Lane Xang Avenue, P.O.Box: 3556,  
Vientiane  
Lao People’s Democratic Republic

7. Malaysia

Mr. Jayappragas Muthuveeroo  
Senior Principal Assistant Director,  
Tourism Policy and International Affairs Division,  
Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia  
Level 13, No 2, Tower 1  
Jalan P5/6 Precint 5,  
Putrajaya 62200  
Malaysia

Ms. Farizatol Huda Abdul Rahim  
Senior Assistant Secretary;  
Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia  
Level 13, No 2, Tower 1  
Jalan P5/6 Precint 5,  
Putrajaya 62200  
Malaysia

8. Mongolia

Ms. Bayasgalan Saranjav  
Director General,  
Ministry of Environment and Tourism,  
Department of Tourism Policy Coordination  
Government Building – 2  
United Nations’ Street 5-2  
Ulaanbaatar 15160  
Mongolia

Mr. Duuren Tumenjargal  
Adviser to the Minister of Environment and Tourism,  
Ministry of Environment and Tourism  
Government Building – 2  
United Nations’ Street 5-2  
Ulaanbaatar  
Mongolia

9. Papua New Guinea

Ms. Alcinda Trawen  
Director-Policy and Planning,  
PNG Tourism Promotion Authority  
P.O. Box 1291  
Port Moresby NCD  
Papua New Guinea

Mr. Wilfred Puka  
Tourism Product Development Officer,  
PNG Tourism Promotion Authority  
P.O. Box 1291  
Port Moresby NCD  
Papua New Guinea

10. Philippines

Ms. Bernadette Romulo-Puyat  
Secretary,  
Philippine Department of Tourism  
DOT Bldg., 351 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City  
Philippines

Mr. Benito Jr. Bengzon  
Under Secretary,  
Philippine Department of Tourism  
DOT Bldg., 351 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City  
Philippines

Mr. Edwin Enrile  
Undersecretary (Deputy Minister),  
Philippine Department of Tourism  
DOT Bldg., 351 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City  
Philippines

Mr. Alex Macatuno  
Chief Tourism Operations Officer,  
Philippine Department of Tourism  
DOT Bldg., 351 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City  
Philippines

Ms. Jem Micaiah Turla  
Senior Tourism Operations Officer,  
Philippine Department of Tourism  
DOT Bldg., 351 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City  
Philippines
Mr. Czar Arjay Claro  
Executive Assistant,  
Philippine Department of Tourism  
DOT Bldg., 351 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City  
Philippines

Ms. Josephine Faustino  
Executive Assistant,  
Philippine Department of Tourism  
DOT Bldg., 351 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City  
Philippines

Ms. Raquel Ruth A. Tria  
Officer-In-Charge,  
Events Marketing and Services Division,  
Philippine Tourism Promotions Board  
Legaspi Towers 300, 4F Roxas Boulevard  
Malate, Manilla 1004, Metro Manilla  
Philippines

11. Republic of Korea

Ms. Hyangmi Jung  
Director,  
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism  
388, Galmae-ro, Sejong-si, 339-012  
Seoul,  
Republic of Korea

Ms. Hyeri Han  
Deputy Director,  
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism  
388, Galmae-ro, Sejong-si, 339-012  
Seoul,  
Republic of Korea

12. Samoa

Mr. Pogi Kitiona  
CEO,  
Samoa Tourism Authority  
P.O. Box 2272

13. Thailand

Ms. Daranee Likhitworasak  
Chief Inspector General,  
Ministry of Tourism and Sports  
4 Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue, Pomparbsattrupai  
Bangkok 10100  
Thailand

Mr. Arrun Boonchai  
Assistant Permanent Secretary,  
Ministry of Tourism and Sports  
4 Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue, Pomparbsattrupai  
Bangkok 10100  
Thailand

Ms. Jiraporn Prommaha  
Director,  
International Affairs Division,  
Ministry of Tourism and Sports  
4 Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue, Pomparbsattrupai  
Bangkok 10100  
Thailand

Mr. Gun Puntuhong  
International Affairs Officer,  
Ministry of Tourism and Sports  
4 Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue, Pomparbsattrupai  
Bangkok 10100  
Thailand

Ms. Wasawan Bhowati  
Plan and Analyst, Professional Level,  
Ministry of Tourism and Sports  
4 Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue, Pomparbsattrupai  
Bangkok 10100  
Thailand

14. Timor-Leste

Mr. Jose Filipe Dias Quintas  
Director General of Tourism,  
Ministry of Tourism Trade and Industry  
Avenida de Motael No. 2  
Farol, Dili  
Timor-Leste

15. Vanuatu

Mr. Bob Loughman
Deputy Prime Minister,
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry of Tourism
Trade, Commerce and Ni-Vanuatu Business
First Floor, Tamarama Building
PMB 9056
Port Vila
Vanuatu

Mr. Roy Mickey Joy
Director General,
Ministry of Tourism and Trades Industry, Commerce and
Ni-Vanuatu Business
PMB 9097
Port Vila
Vanuatu

Mr. Jerry Spooner
Director,
Department of Tourism, Vanuatu
PMB 9099, George Pompidou Area
Port Vila
Vanuatu

Mr. Simil Johnson Youse
First Political Advisor,
Ministry of Tourism and Trades Industry, Commerce and
Ni-Vanuatu Business
PMB 9056
Port Vila
Vanuatu

Mr. Narai Yabese
Head of Security,
Ministry of Tourism and Trades Industry, Commerce and
Ni-Vanuatu Business

16. Viet Nam

Mr. Tran Phu Cuong
Director General,
Vietnam National Administration of Tourism
80 Quan Su Street
Ha Noi
Viet Nam

UNWTO Commission for South Asia (CAS)
Member States

1. Bangladesh

Mr. Md. Mahbub Ali
State Minister,
Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism
Floor 19, Building 06
Dhaka 1000
Bangladesh

Ms. Nilufar Yesmin
Deputy Director,
Bangladesh Tourism Board,
Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism
Level 03, Building 2
BSL Office Complex (Hotel Intercontinental Dhaka), 1 Minto
Road, Dhaka-1000
Bangladesh

Mr. Bhubon Chandra Biswas
Chief Executive Officer,
Bangladesh Tourism Board,
Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism
Level 03, Building 2
BSL Office Complex (Hotel Intercontinental Dhaka), 1 Minto
Road, Dhaka-1000
Bangladesh

Mr. Md A Jalil
Deputy Secretary,
Bangladesh Tourism Board,
Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism
Level 03, Building 2
BSL Office Complex (Hotel Intercontinental Dhaka), 1 Minto
Road, Dhaka-1000
Bangladesh

Mr. Shabab Bin Ahmed
Counsellor,
Embassy of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
Plot No. HIG
Upper Chubachu, Timphu
Bhutan
2. Bhutan

Mr. Dorji Dhradhul  
Director General,  
Tourism Council of Bhutan  
P.O. Box 126 Thimphu  
Bhutan

Ms. Pema Dekar  
Chief Tourism Officer,  
Services Division,  
Tourism Council of Bhutan  
P.O. Box 126 Thimphu  
Bhutan

Mr. Rinzin Jamtsho  
Chief Tourism Officer,  
Tourism Council of Bhutan  
P.O. Box 126 Thimphu  
Bhutan

Mr. Thinley Rinzin  
Chief Tourism Officer,  
Tourism Council of Bhutan  
P.O. Box 126 Thimphu  
Bhutan

Mr. Kinley Wangdi  
Chief Tourism Officer  
Tourism Council of Bhutan  
P.O. Box 126 Thimphu  
Bhutan

3. India

Mr. Suman Billa  
Joint Secretary,  
Ministry of Tourism  
Transport Bhavan, 1 Sansad Marg  
New Delhi – 110001  
India

4. Maldives

Mr. Ahmed Salih  
Minister of State for Tourism,  
Ministry of Tourism  
5th Floor, Velanaaage  
Ameer Ahmed Magu 20096  
Maldives

5. Nepal

Mr. Mohan Krishna Sapkota  
Secretary,  
Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation  
Singhadarbar  
Kathmandu  
Nepal

Mr. Deepak Raj Joshi  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Nepal Tourism Board,  
Tourist Service Center  
P.O Box: 11018  
Bhrikuti Mandap  
Kathmandu  
Nepal

Mr. Kashi Raj Bhandari  
Senior Director,  
Research Planning and Monitoring Department,  
Nepal Tourism Board,  
Tourist Service Center  
P.O Box: 11018  
Bhrikuti Mandap  
Kathmandu  
Nepal

6. Sri Lanka

Mr. Siripala Hettiarachchi  
Secretary,  
Ministry of Tourism Development, Wildlife  
6th Floor, Rakshana Mandiraya  
No 21, Vauxhall Street  
Colombo  
Sri Lanka

Mr. R.U. Ratnayake  
Director General,  
Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority  
No 80, Galle Road  
Colombo 03,  
Sri Lanka
### List of participants

#### Associate members

1. **Hong Kong, China**

   **Mr. Anson Lai**  
   Assistant Commissioner for Tourism,  
   Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
   2/F, West Wing, Central Government Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar  
   Hong Kong, China

2. **Macao, China**

   **Ms. Maria Helena De Senna Fernandes**  
   Director,  
   Macao Government Tourism Office  
   Alameda Dr. Carlos d’Assumpcao No. 335–341  
   Edificio Hotline Centre, 13. andar  
   Macao, China

   **Mr. Chang Tek Keong, Dominic**  
   Senior Executive,  
   Communication and External Relations Department,  
   Macao Government Tourism Office  
   Alameda Dr. Carlos d’Assumpcao No. 335–341  
   Edificio Hotline Centre, 12/F andar  
   Macao, China

   **Ms. Kathy Iong**  
   Head of Communication and External Relations Department,  
   Macao Government Tourism Office  
   Alameda Dr. Carlos d’Assumpcao No. 335–341  
   Edificio Hotline Centre, 12/F andar  
   Macao, China

#### UNWTO non-Member States

1. **Palau**

   **Ms. Debbie Remengesau**  
   First Lady of Palau,  
   Palau Legacy Prospect-Palau Pledge,  
   Palau Government  
   P.O. Box 6051  
   Koror, PW, 96940  
   Palau

   **Mr. Olkeriil Kazuo**  
   Press Secretary,  
   Board Member-Palau Visitors Authority,  
   Palau Government  
   P.O. Box 6051  
   Koror, PW, 96940  
   Palau

   **Ms. Nanae Singeo**  
   Special Advisor to the President,  
   Co-founder of Palau Legacy Project,  
   Palau Government  
   P.O. Box 6051  
   Koror, PW, 96940  
   Palau
**CAP and CSA Affiliate Members**

1. **Wakayama University**
   
   Ms. Kumi Kato  
   Professor,  
   Wakayama University  
   930 Sakaedani, Wakayama,  
   640-8510  
   Japan

2. **Chameleon Strategies/Mekong Tourism Coordination Office**
   
   Mr. Jens Thraenhart  
   CEO/Executive Director,  
   Chameleon Strategies/Mekong Tourism  
   Floor 5, 281/19-23 Silom Soi 1  
   Bangkok  
   Thailand  

   Ms. Mariya Thraenhart  
   Director,  
   Chameleon Strategies  
   Floor 5, 281/19-23 Silom Soi 1  
   Bangkok  
   Thailand

3. **Corporacion Comunicacion Iberoamericana**
   
   Mr. Diego Barcelo Perez  
   CEO,  
   Corporacion Comunicacion Iberoamericana  
   Calle de Velázquez, 55  
   28001 Madrid  
   Spain

   Ms. Maria Jose Garcia Rodriguez  
   General Account Manager,  
   Corporacion Comunicacion Iberoamericana  
   Calle de Velázquez, 55  
   28001 Madrid  
   Spain

4. **DiscoveryMICE**
   
   Mr. Lee Choon Loong  
   President/CEO,  
   DiscoveryMICE  
   48B, Jalan Mamanda 9, Ampang  
   68000 Kuala Lumpur  
   Malaysia

5. **Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao, China**
   
   Ms. Chuk Kwan Vong  
   President,  
   Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao  
   Colina de Mong-Há,  
   Macao, China

6. **JATA (Japan Association of Travel Agents)**
   
   Mr. Hiroshi Sawabe  
   Executive Director,  
   Office of International Tourism,  
   Japan Association of Travel Agents  
   3-3-3 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku  
   Tokyo 100-0013  
   Japan  
   Tel: +81335921274

7. **JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co.**
   
   Mr. Junichi Kumada  
   Chief Researcher,  
   Global Tourism Agenda,  
   JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co.  
   12F Celestine Shibai Mitsui Bldg. 3-23-1 Shiba  
   Minato-ku  
   Tokyo 105-0014  
   Japan

   Mr. Shinobu Ozawa  
   Senior Officer,  
   JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co.  
   12F Celestine Shibai Mitsui Bldg. 3-23-1 Shiba  
   Minato-ku  
   Tokyo 105-0014  
   Japan  
   Tel: +34915678100
8. Jeju Tourism Organization

Mr. Chang Haeng Hyun
Vice President,
Jeju Tourism Organization
Jeju Welcome Center, 23 Seondeok-ro (Yeon-dong), Jeju City, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
Republic of Korea

Ms. SunYoung Koh
Director of Tourism Research Center,
Jeju Tourism Organization
Jeju Welcome Center, 23 Seondeok-ro (Yeon-dong), Jeju City, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
Republic of Korea

Mr. Sang Cheol Kim
Manager of Overseas Marketing Dept,
Jeju Tourism Organization
Jeju Welcome Center, 23 Seondeok-ro (Yeon-dong), Jeju City, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
Republic of Korea

Ms. Migyeong Alfy Jo
Manager of Tourism Research Center,
Tourism Research Center,
Jeju Tourism Organization
Jeju Welcome Center, 23 Seondeok-ro (Yeon-dong), Jeju City, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
Republic of Korea

9. JNTO (Japan National Tourism Organization)

Mr. Zenbon Tei
Director,
Global Study Headquarters,
Japan National Tourism Organization
4-4-1, Yotsuya, Shinjuku-ku,
Tokyo 160-0004
Japan

Industry representatives

1. Amadeus Travel Audience/Smartdata.travel

Mr. Alexander Rayner
Director Destinations APAC,
Amadeus Travel Audience/Smartdata.travel
Elsenstraße 106
12435 Berlin
Germany

2. Jeju Special Self-Governing Province

Mr. Dong Woo Ahn
Vice Governor,
Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
6 Munyeon-ro, Jeju
Republic of Korea

Mr. Kyeong Bok Moon
Executive Director,
Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
6 Munyeon-ro, Jeju
Republic of Korea

Mr. Deok Hwan Han
Assistant Director,
Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
6 Munyeon-ro, Jeju
Republic of Korea

3. Six Senses Resort and Spas

Ms. Yeshey Choden
Sustainability Manager,
Six Senses
Thimphu
Bhutan
### International and regional organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. ICHCAP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mr. Junegi Lim</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Tourism Professional, ICHCAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 Seohak-ro, Wansan-gu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeonju, Jeollabuk-do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55101</td>
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<td>Republic of Korea</td>
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<th>2. UNDP Nepal</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ms. Asusa Kubota</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN House, P.O. BOX 162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peling Lam, Kawangsa, Thimpu, Bhutan</td>
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### Consultants and speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asian Ecotourism Network</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mr. Masaru Takayama</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding Chair, Asian Ecotourism Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c/o Designated Area for Sustainable Tourism Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118/1, Tipco, 31st Floor, Rama 6 Road, Samsen Nai, Khet Phaya, Bangkok 10400</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mr. Karma Tshering</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder, International Institute for Peace through Tourism</td>
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<td>Thimphu, Bhutan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mr. Yoshinori Ochi</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of the Board and Secretary General, Japan Association of Travel Agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3-3 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo 100-0013</td>
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<th>Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dr. Mario Hardy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO, Pacific Asia Travel Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28F Siam Piwat Tower, 989 Rama 1 Road</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bangkok, Thailand</td>
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<th>Royal Civil Service Commission</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mr. Karma Tshiteem</strong></td>
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<td>Former Chairperson, Royal Civil Service Commission</td>
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<td>Thimphu, Bhutan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mr. Jeffery Smith</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-President Sustainability, Six Senses Resort Spas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Ventures Ecoplex, 9th Floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57 Wireless Road, Bankok 10330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of participants

Palau Government/Palau Legacy Project
Ms. Laura Clarke
Co-Founder, Palau Legacy Project
Palau Government/Palau Legacy Project
123 Headland Drive
Gerroa, NSW, 2534
Australia

UNDP Nepal
Mr. Kiyeon Kim
Program Analyst,
Inclusive Economic Growth,
UNDP Nepal
UN House, Pulchowk
G.P.O Box 107, Kathmandu,
Nepal

UNWTO Consultant
Mr. Paul Rogers
Consultant,
Planet Happiness

Yeewong Magazine
Ms. Pema Choden Tenzin
Founder and CEO,
Yeewong Magazine
Babesa
Thimphu
Bhutan

Zhiwa Ling Hotels
Mr. Brent Hyde
Managing Director,
Zhiwa Ling Hotels
Satsam Chorten
Paro
Bhutan

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili
Secretary-General
C/ Poeta Joan Maragall 42
28020 Madrid
Spain

Mr. Zhu Shanzhong
Executive Director,
C/ Poeta Joan Maragall 42
28020 Madrid
Spain

Mr. Xu Jing
Director,
Regional Department for Asia-Pacific
C/ Poeta Joan Maragall 42
28020 Madrid
Spain

Dr. Dirk Glaesser
Director,
Sustainable Development of Tourism
C/ Poeta Joan Maragall 42
28020 Madrid
Spain

Mr. Beka Jakeli
Coordinator for Member Relations
C/ Poeta Joan Maragall 42
28020 Madrid
Spain
Tel: +34915678100

Mr. Harry Hwang
Deputy Director,
Regional Department for Asia-Pacific
C/ Poeta Joan Maragall 42
28020 Madrid
Spain

Ms. Christine Brew
Technical Coordinator,
Regional Department for Asia-Pacific
C/ Poeta Joan Maragall 42
28020 Madrid
Spain
UNWTO Regional Support Office for Asia and the Pacific

Mr. Yoshiaki Hompo
Chief,
UNWTO Regional Support Office for Asia-Pacific
Silkia Nara 2F, 8-1, Sanjo-Honmachi
Nara
Japan

Ms. Hiroko Suzuki
Deputy Chief,
UNWTO Regional Support Office for Asia-Pacific
Silkia Nara 2F, 8-1, Sanjo-Honmachi
Nara
Japan

Mr. Hiroshi Murata
Manager,
External Relations and Project Planning,
UNWTO Regional Support Office for Asia-Pacific
Silkia Nara 2F, 8-1, Sanjo-Honmachi
Nara
Japan

Ms. Ariana Luquin Sanchez
Deputy Manager,
UNWTO Regional Support Office for Asia-Pacific
Silkia Nara 2F, 8-1, Sanjo-Honmachi
Nara
Japan

Ms. Junko Yoshida
Senior Assistant,
UNWTO Regional Support Office for Asia-Pacific
Silkia Nara 2F, 8-1, Sanjo-Honmachi
Nara
Japan
The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 159 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 500 Affiliate Members.