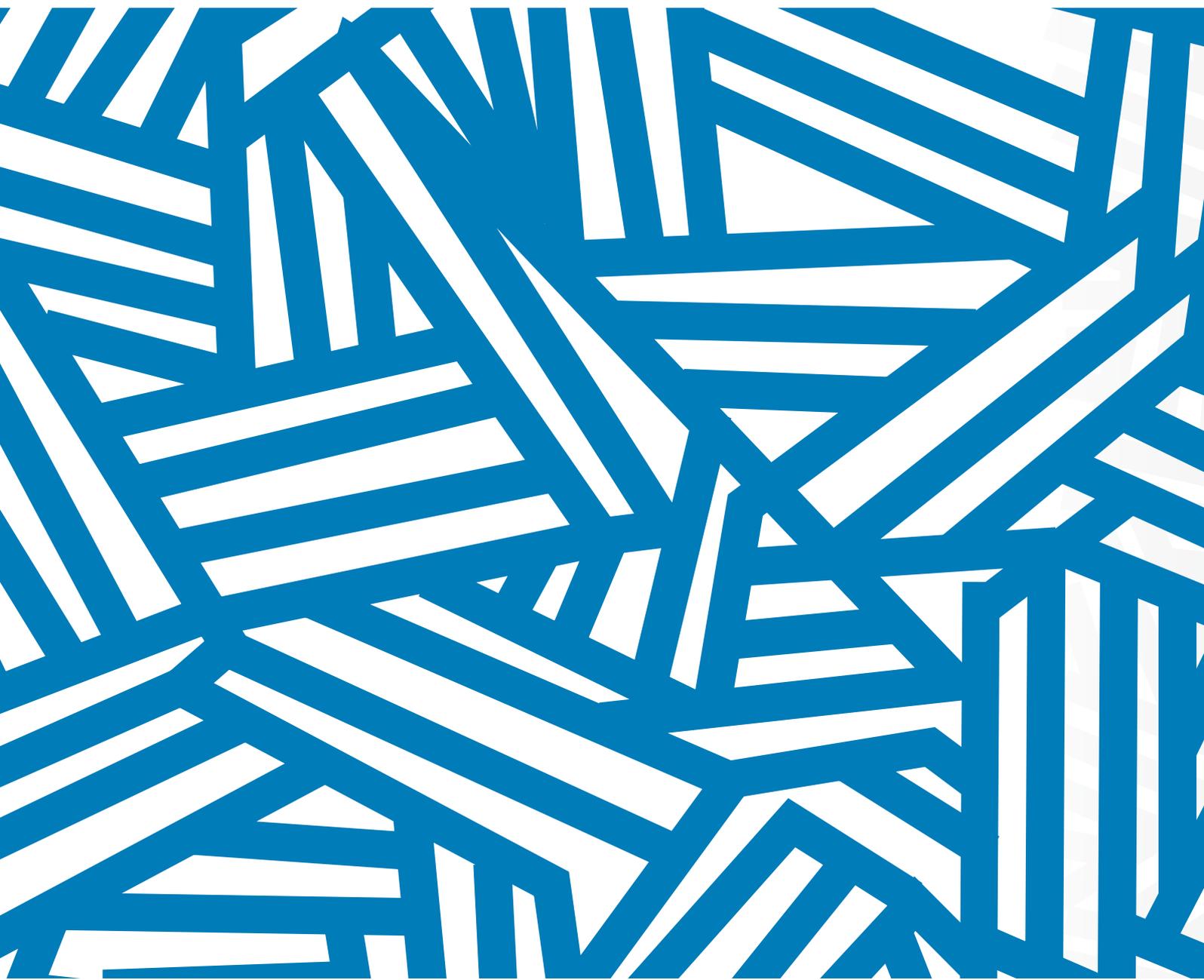


# Tourism and Disaster Risk

A contribution by the United Nations to the consultation leading to  
the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction



## Overview/rationale

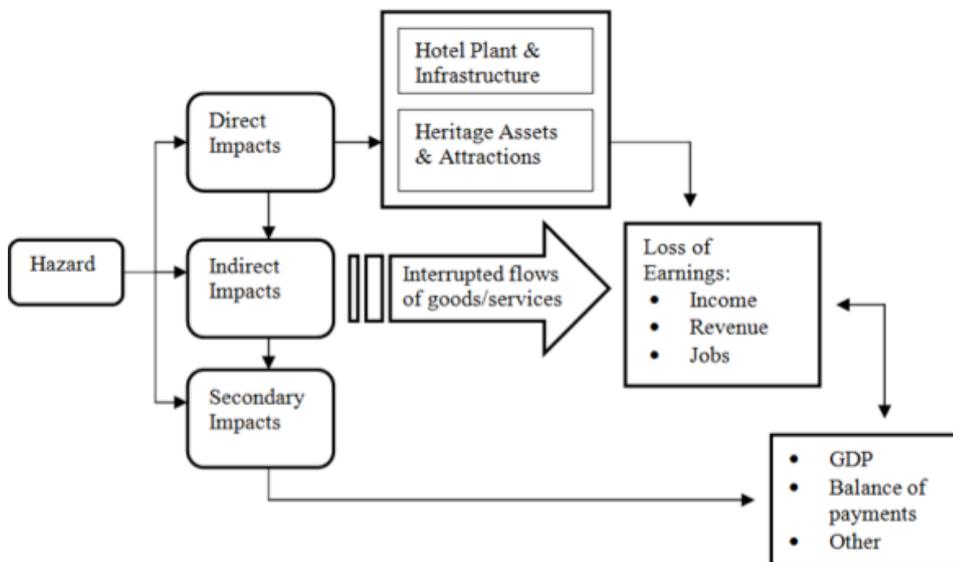
The importance of travel and tourism as an economic activity is growing constantly and has reached, at the international level, dimensions that haven't been seen before. Over the past decades, international tourist arrivals have more than doubled, from 473 million in 1992 to 1035 billion in 2012. By 2030, this number is forecast to go up to 1.8 billion, 57% of which will be from emerging economies as compared to 47% in 2012. Therefore, tourism is becoming globally one of the most important economic activities, sometimes the dominant economic activity in many less and least developed countries. Tourism is contributing to the voluntary redistribution of wealth, reduction of poverty and creation of employment, as well as supporting many objectives of MDG, conservation of nature and culture.

At the same time, the sector is regularly challenged by crises caused by natural, man-made or other often subjective risks. Acknowledging that tourism products are predominantly immaterial and often depend on perception; the sector is, thus, highly sensitive to both objective and subjective risks.

To manage these challenges adequately, relevant structures and processes have to be designed in a robust but also flexible manner with clear understanding of the special needs and concerns of the travel and tourism sector.

As it is now, the role of tourism sector is often underestimated and the integration of travel and tourism into the national emergency structures and procedures is often only a result of major incidents that affected the country and caused major losses to the sector and to the national economy.

Example - Direct damage caused by Hurricane Gilbert in Jamaica led to a loss of property and equipment in the tourism sector amounting to about US\$85 million. The indirect impact was much greater. In foreign exchange alone the loss from September to December 1988 was US\$90 million - a particularly painful loss since the foreign exchange was needed to finance recovery programs. The temporary closing of hotels for repairs meant fewer visitors to the island, causing other indirect effects such as loss of income for the national airline and reduction in employment and the purchase of local goods and services<sup>1</sup>.



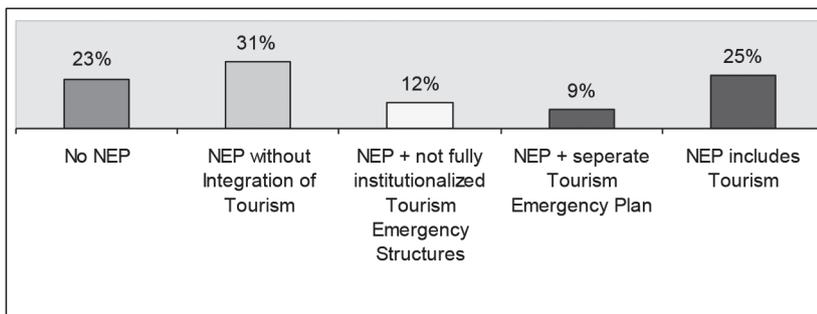
Tourism is globally one of the most important economic activities and in some countries the dominant economic activity. Every day on average 5 – 8 million people travel internationally and another 20 – 40 million people travel within their own countries. These numbers are continuously growing, contributing to 9% of global GDP and generating over 260 million jobs (1 in 11 of the world's total jobs). The industry outperformed the entire wider economy in 2012, growing faster than other notable sectors such as manufacturing, financial services and retail. In 2012, international tourist spent US\$386 billion in merging countries, over five times the level of official development assistance which goes to these countries. It is one of their main sources of foreign exchange earnings.

Direct and indirect losses from disasters can thus affect not only the entire tourism sector but national economies as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> [www.oas.org](http://www.oas.org)

## Status of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in tourism/infrastructure

Based on the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) survey in 2008, 72% of countries respondents (48 out of 67) have a National Emergency Plan (NEP) and 65% of those with NEP (31 of 48) have tourism covered specifically.



- Even though national emergency structures and processes are continuously evolving, in many countries they are still undeveloped and under-funded and in some locations non-existent.
- At the same time, those with older plans and established structures have no specification for tourism at national level and refer to regional/local responsibilities.
- Moreover, national emergency management agencies have often been established to address a specific type of disaster (for example: Flood, Famine, Earthquake) and this has resulted in emergency planning being focused within a ministry that has little or no prior connection with, or understanding of, wider issues such as tourism.

Thus it is difficult for the tourism sector to integrate with government emergency structures if their own tourism emergency plan does not exist, or is severely under-developed, or is using rigid structures that do not allow integration of tourism.

Mainstreaming disaster risk in the tourism sector as well as tourism sector into national emergency structures is too often driven by incidents (start focusing on it once a major emergency in the tourism sector happens). Data indicates that those incidents that resulted in high losses in bookings and reservations prompted for risk to be specifically addressed in the tourism sector.

To use the development potential of tourism and taking into account that the tourism sector is continuously growing in importance, prevention is of utmost importance. Therefore, the inclusion of tourism into emergency structures and processes will contribute to building resilience and a higher capacity to deal with external shocks.

### Emerging trends

#### 1. Good practices

Aware that being prepared makes the vital difference to casualty figures and economic losses in the wake of a crisis, UNWTO assists its Member States to assess natural and man-made risks in tourism destinations and implement systems to reduce the impact of, and assist in the recovery from crises.

UNWTO is finalizing the guidelines on the integration of travel and tourism into national emergency structures and procedures. This publication will provide governmental institutions involved in emergency planning, coordination and management such as Civil Protection, Interior, Health or Foreign Affairs comprehensive, with up-to-date and practical guidance on the special needs and concerns of the travel and tourism sector. On the other hand, it will address the roles and forms of an effective integration of the sector through National Tourism Organizations (NTOs), Destinations Management Organizations (DMOs) and private sector organizations involved in travel and tourism.

One more case is the recommendation on the use of the geo-reference systems which was adopted during the nineteen General Assembly of UNWTO in 2011, with the aim of improving the relevance, efficiency, transparency, to help limit unnecessary repercussions of information related to negative events, and at the same time, making use of the increased role of the internet, and other forms of electronic communications in the dissemination of information. UNWTO encouraged countries to provide efficient and transparent information of negative events to help limit the undesired repercussions through the use of the geo-referenced technology, date and time in travel advice and event information.

In addition, the Toolbox for Crisis Communications in Tourism can be seen as good example of crisis communication improvement. UNWTO has developed this Toolbox for National Tourism Organizations (NTOs), Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and private sector organizations involved in travel and tourism. It includes step-by-step protocol, check-lists, sample templates configured by type of crisis and media categories, guidelines for measuring effectiveness, best practices and a spe-

cial chapter fully dedicated to the use of social media in times of crisis. This Toolbox serves as a practical guide for travel and tourism stakeholders, to effectively address the challenges generated by crises.

The Tourism Emergency Response Network (TERN), a group of more than 30 leading tourism network associations established by UNWTO started as an advisory and participatory body dealing with the AHI pandemic. It has since dealt with a number of major events following the pandemic (H1N1) 2009, such as the volcano ash cloud incidence, the tsunami and nuclear accident in Japan and the Arab Spring.

## Drivers for mainstreaming disaster risk into the tourism sector

Countries that are often severely affected by disaster and climate change are also often heavily dependent on the tourism sector for economic growth. Tourism infrastructure is often located in areas exposed to sudden-onset natural disasters, in particular beach and coastal areas, river valleys and mountain regions. Often, the perception alone of risk and disruption can affect tourist decisions and movements. The total contribution of tourism to, for example, the Pacific Islands economies in 2011 ranged from 35 to 53 per cent of GDP for countries with high international tourism arrivals, such as Fiji, Cook Islands (the), Samoa and Vanuatu<sup>2</sup>. Increasing resilience of the tourism sector (especially in SIDS, as well as coastal regions) thus requires mainstreaming disaster risk into the tourism sector.

At the same time, there is need to integrate the tourism and emergency sectors in the most encompassing way possible. While disaster and climate change concerns have different origins, they overlap in many aspects through common factors, especially weather and climate that affects the tourism sector in similar way. In addition, similar tools to monitor, analyze and address adverse consequences can be used in the tourism sector. It therefore makes sense to consider implementing them in an integrated and systematic manner.

### Challenges when mainstreaming disaster risk into the tourism sector:

- Multi-sectoral and international nature of tourism (transport, accommodation branches and so on have individual, often not coordinated approaches to risk management).
- Lack of expertise in the sector, especially in developing countries
- Lack of coordination and existing institutions. Even though national emergency structures and processes are continuously evolving, in many countries they are still undeveloped and under-funded and in some locations non-existent. A key issue for tourism is that national emergency management agencies have often been established to address a specific type of disaster (for example: Flood, Famine, Earthquake) and this has resulted in emergency planning being focused within a ministry that has little or no prior connection with, or understanding of, wider issues such as tourism. Obviously, it is difficult for the tourism sector to integrate with government emergency structures if they do not exist, or are severely under-developed.

## Recommendations for addressing disaster risk in tourism in the Post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (DRR)

- Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and other risks needs to be mainstreamed into the tourism sector (both regional and national), as well as tourism the agendas of Authorities in charge of emergency management.
- There is a need to develop the Regional and National Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks and Systems and agree on the coordinating body for monitoring/screening, assessing and evaluating risks as well risk management planning and reporting DRM and CCA in the tourism sector.
- It is of great importance to ensure community-level, tourists and other stakeholder's involvement as well as transparency and accountability, and inclusiveness of the system.
- Focus on resilience building in the sector instead of reactive crisis approaches.
- Early warning system development.
- Simulation and training exercises to not only look at the strengths and weaknesses, but to verify procedures and improving skills to identify further resources and strengthen coordination of all stakeholders.
- There is a strong need for capacity-building and establishing preparedness in the sector.

<sup>2</sup> WTTC (2012). *The Comparative Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism*. Oxford Economics. available at: [www.wttc.org/focus/research-for-action/benchmark-reports/the-comparative-economic-impact-of-travel-tourism/\(06-11-2014\)](http://www.wttc.org/focus/research-for-action/benchmark-reports/the-comparative-economic-impact-of-travel-tourism/(06-11-2014))

## Measuring disaster risk in tourism

UNWTO is committed to demonstrate the value of the tourism sector and its impact on economic growth and sustainable development. Providing millions of direct jobs worldwide, as well as countless more through its multiplier effects on related sectors such as trade, manufacturing, construction or agriculture. It is already one of the largest sectors in employment terms, providing employment opportunities for young people and women in both urban and rural communities.

## List of agencies contributing and a brief description of the institutional commitment

Since tourism is a multi-sectorial activity, there are several actors within and outside the sector involved that can address the crises. The issue of roles and responsibilities is a key factor for effective risk management. Thus, there is a need for clear coordination between the tourism sector and the national emergency systems at national, regional and international level. It not only identifies what potential resources are available but also demands clear policy as to how those resources will be coordinated in an effective manner before, during and after a crisis.

International: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Health Organization (WHO); UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO); Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

National: Major players: Civil Protection, Interior, Health and Foreign Affairs. Although only few countries have tourism components on both sides equally developed, national emergency plans usually identify certain key stakeholders that are common across all plans (police, fire & rescue, ambulance, civil defense, red cross/red crescent). There is however a large number of other vital organizations which are forgotten; many of these are voluntary; others are linked to business, industry or academia.

## Key documents/source of additional information

UNEP APELL – Awareness and preparedness for emergencies at local level

Recommendations on the Use of Geo-references, Date and Time in Travel Advice and Event Information

Tourism Emergency Response Network (TERN) <http://rcm.unwto.org/en/content/about-tourism-emergency-response-network-tern-0>

UNEP Disaster Risk Management For Coastal Tourism Destinations Responding To Climate Change A Practical Guide For Decision Makers <http://www.chemeng.tsinghua.edu.cn/APELL/userfiles/file/DT1x1048xPA-DisasterRiskManagementforCoastalTourism.pdf>

Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Tourism Sector: Frameworks, Tools and Practices <http://sdt.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/ccoxford.pdf>

UNISDR Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (HFA2): Report from 2013 Global Platform Consultations (October 2013): [http://www.unisdr.org/files/35070\\_hfa2consultationsgp2013report.pdf](http://www.unisdr.org/files/35070_hfa2consultationsgp2013report.pdf)

World Tourism Organization (2014), Tourism and Emergency Management, UNWTO. Madrid

**About the UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience:** The UN Plan of Action, endorsed by the UN Secretary-General and the Executives Heads of UN Specialized Agencies, Funds and Programmes, includes a commitment for the UN system to work together to ensure disaster risk reduction is a key component of the post-2015 development agenda supported by a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (HFA2). The UN Plan of Action improves system-wide coordinated actions and coherence, as well as increased effectiveness and collaboration in the support to Member States on disaster risk reduction.

**UN High Level Programmes Committee Senior Managers Group on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience (HLCP/SMG):** Members of the HCLP/SMG that oversees the implementation of the UN plan of Action are FAO, IAEA, IFAD, IFRC, ILO, IMO, IOM, ITU, UNAIDS, UNCCD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHABITAT, UNHCHR, UNICEF, UNISDR, UNOCHA, UNOPS, UNOOSA, UNWOMEN, UNWTO, UPU, WFP, WHO and the World Bank.

