The tourism sector response to climate change: mitigation and adaptation initiatives and strategies

Thursday, 29 November 2012, 18:30 – 20:00 h - Qatar National Convention Centre, Doha, Qatar

AGENDA

Please note that if you wish to attend this side event, you must be registered to participate at the COP18.

Preliminary Programme

18:30-19:30  Tourism and Climate Change – The Issues at Stake

- Mr. Luigi Cabrini; Director Sustainable Development of Tourism; UNWTO
- Mr. Peter Dogsé; Manager Intersectoral Platform on Climate Change; UNESCO
- Ms. Jane Hupe; Chief of Environment Branch; ICAO
- Dr. Edmund Hughes; Technical Officer; IMO
- Dr. Murray C. Simpson; Oxford University Centre for the Environment

19:30-20:00  Discussion

- Conclusions

On the occasion of this event the publication “Tourism in the Green Economy” will be launched.
Background

Over the past two decades international tourist arrivals have more than doubled, from 433 million in 1991 to 990 million in 2011. By the end of 2012, one seventh of the world’s population will have crossed international borders as tourists while by 2030 this number is forecast to go up to 1.8 billion.

Tourism represents today directly 5% of the GDP and over 1.1 trillion USD in exports around the globe. More importantly, tourism employs 1 in 12 people worldwide and creates opportunities for decent jobs, particularly for women and youth.

Representing around 45% of the exports of services for least developed countries, tourism has been identified by most LDCs and SIDS as a powerful engine for poverty reduction and development.

The tourism sector is considered to be highly-climate sensitive as climate defines the length and quality of tourism seasons, affects tourism operations, and influences environmental conditions that both attract and deter visitors. The effects of a changing climate will have considerable impacts on tourism and travel businesses. In some parts of the world, these impacts are increasingly becoming evident.

Tourism and travel is also a vector of climate change, accounting for approximately five per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions. According to a 2008 study (UNWTO, UNEP, WMO), by 2035, under a “business as usual” scenario, carbon dioxide emissions from global tourism are projected to increase substantially.

For an effective reduction of emissions, the tourism sector needs to apply a combination of mitigation measures. Under the most effective mitigation projection, using a combination of technological innovation and modal shifts/length of stay, the ‘business-as-usual’ scenario emissions in 2035 could actually be reduced with respect to the 2005 baseline.

A scenario of emissions reduction in the tourism sector has also been recently developed in the tourism chapter of the UN Green Economy Report (GER), jointly prepared by UNWTO and UNEP. An investment of 0.2% of global GDP (or USD 248 billions at constant 2010 prices) between 2011 and 2050 to the tourism sector would result in energy savings and reduction of CO2 emissions by 2050 in respect of the BAU scenario. Greening tourism would also result in lesser water consumption and higher employment.

The UNWT-UNEP publication: “Tourism in the green economy”, an expanded version of the tourism chapter of the GER, will be officially launched on the occasion of this side event.

As tourism is so important to poverty reduction and economic growth in developing nations, any policies aimed at mitigating and reducing greenhouse gas emissions should be formulated and implemented in a considered way in order not to disadvantage these countries.

Scenarios of reduction of emissions will require strong support from Governments, International Organizations and Financial Institutions, to materialize. Leadership from the tourism industry is also essential to drive the necessary changes in the transport and accommodation sectors, which represent the highest share of tourism activities.

The side event will be an opportunity for the relevant UN bodies as well as academia and the private sector to present an outlook of the technological innovations and other strategies which can effectively reduce the contribution of tourism to global warming.