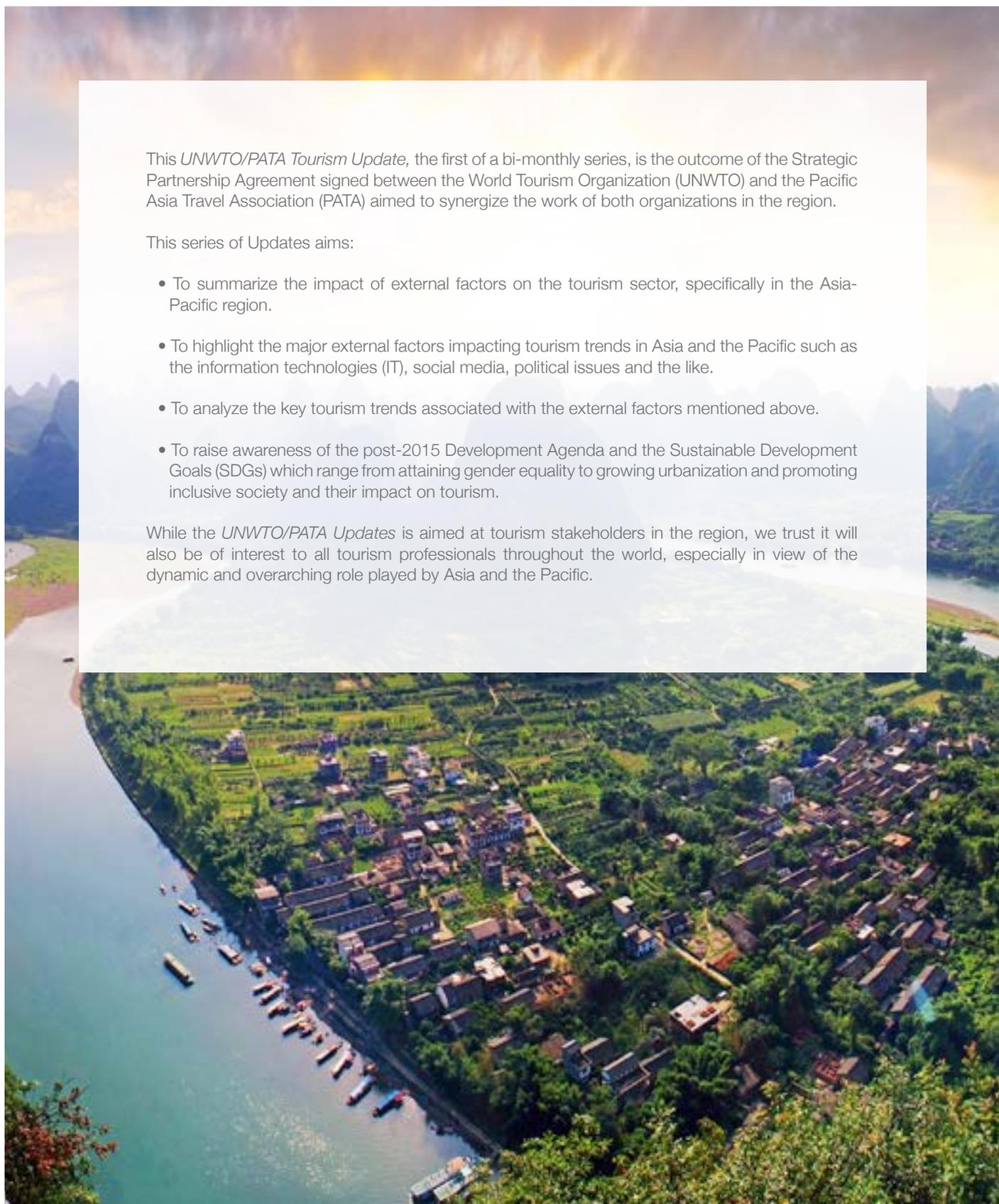


This *UNWTO/PATA Tourism Update*, the first of a bi-monthly series, is the outcome of the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) aimed to synergize the work of both organizations in the region.

This series of Updates aims:

- To summarize the impact of external factors on the tourism sector, specifically in the Asia-Pacific region.
- To highlight the major external factors impacting tourism trends in Asia and the Pacific such as the information technologies (IT), social media, political issues and the like.
- To analyze the key tourism trends associated with the external factors mentioned above.
- To raise awareness of the post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which range from attaining gender equality to growing urbanization and promoting inclusive society and their impact on tourism.

While the *UNWTO/PATA Updates* is aimed at tourism stakeholders in the region, we trust it will also be of interest to all tourism professionals throughout the world, especially in view of the dynamic and overarching role played by Asia and the Pacific.



UN calls for 2015 to mark the start of the Asia-Pacific Century

Bangkok (Source: ESCAP News) – The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held its 71st annual ministerial session in Bangkok between 25-29 May, 2015 with its Executive Secretary identifying 2015 as a year of global and regional opportunity, and calling on the region's leaders to take action to foster long-term shared prosperity.

"This year, global leaders will lay the foundations of a far-reaching new sustainable development agenda, and sustainability will be further reinforced with a new agreement on climate change and new global partnerships," said United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar. "As we take the first steps in the next phase of our shared development journey, the people of Asia and the Pacific are poised to lead in economic growth, in social innovation and in environmental stewardship. We look to the leaders of our region to seize the opportunities of sustainable development and to ensure that 2015 also marks the real start of the Asia-Pacific Century," she said.

Dr. Akhtar highlighted that with member State support, ESCAP is taking steps to advance stronger regional connectivity for shared prosperity: "Regional integrated intermodal and multimodal transport and logistics systems could combine the strengths of our Trans-Asian Railway and Asian Highway networks into a single integrated intermodal system, with the inclusion of dry ports and maritime transport," she said.

"To close the widening digital divide in the region, our intergovernmental processes are also negotiating principles and norms, and preparing a master plan for the proposed Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway to provide affordable and reliable access to broadband internet for all," said Dr. Akhtar.

The 71st session was held under the theme 'Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation,' and places particular emphasis on balancing and integrating the economic, environmental and social aspects of development. At the request of its member States, ESCAP's new theme study presents the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development as critical to the success of the post-2015 development agenda. The report also advocates for social justice and ecological protection in order to achieve robust, inclusive and sustainable growth.

In a written message to the 71st Commission session, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed: "The new agenda calls for a strong financing framework for sustainable development and the implementation of the post-2015 agenda that addresses systemic issues for long-term economic growth and employment. The new agenda must be strongly rooted in human rights; it must safeguard peace and security, and leave no one behind."

Implications for the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals must now become the over-arching agenda of global tourism.

A quick look at the full list of SDGs shows that the tourism sector is perhaps better placed than any other industry to contribute to the cause across-the-board.

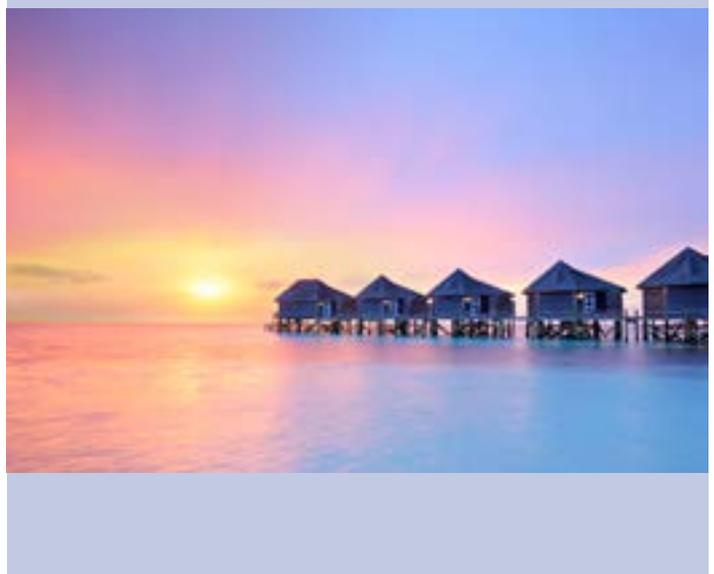
From protecting the very environment on which it survives to conserving cultural heritage, from providing for a better distribution of wealth to creating jobs for women, travel & tourism does it all.

The tourism sector must now mainstream these agenda items into its plans, policies and conference programmes. Universities and educational institutions, the travel media and NGOs must all now get involved in imbuing the SDGs into industry consciousness.

Every year, reports should be produced showing how public and private tourism stakeholders are helping to meet the SDGs.

Targets should be balanced to incorporate both the traditional parameters of success (visitor arrivals, expenditure, length of stay, etc.), as well as the 17-point agenda of the SDGs.

The entire UN system is ready and willing to forge what will be a unique partnership with the tourism sector to shape "The Future We Want" – and successfully achieve it.



Dr. Akhtar emphasized that as the region transitions from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the sustainable development goals (SDGs), ESCAP has intensified its consultations on sustainable development and financing with regional policymakers, civil society and the business community, as well as drawing on experience gained during MDG implementation.

“Besides addressing substantial unfinished business, the SDGs call for integrated approaches to development, country ownership and good governance, supported by global and regional partnerships in areas such as finance, technology and data,” said Dr. Akhtar.

Against the backdrop of changing global and regional dynamics, Dr. Akhtar called for five key adjustments to be made to development paths including the need to enhance domestic consumption and demand; pursue inclusive growth; drive urgent structural reforms; strengthen regional cooperation and integration; and address multiple forms of deprivation between genders, income brackets and across the urban-rural divide.

In his inaugural address, General Prayut Chan-ocha (Ret.), Prime Minister of Thailand, emphasized that the results of climate change and natural disasters present shared challenges for member States. The Prime Minister said that all countries should help promote renewable energy and industrial development that is environmentally friendly, and that every country must be prepared to adapt to handle natural disasters.

The Prime Minister of Fiji Frank Bainimarama, who chaired the session, highlighted the positive economic growth in the region, citing structural reforms such as the liberalization of trade, investment and labour markets and the modernizing of civil service as necessary steps being taken by countries for their continued prosperity.

In opening statements from an unprecedented number of Pacific State leaders, the Presidents of Kiribati and Nauru, and the Prime Ministers of Tuvalu and the Cook Islands, expressed support for ESCAP’s intergovernmental platform and its work to advance development in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), through mechanisms such as the SAMOA Pathway. It was the largest group of Pacific Heads of State and Government on any Commission panel in recent history.

More than 550 participants from 50 member States and Associate Members attended the 71st session which ended with the adoption of an ambitious agenda to promote the balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development

Among the 14 important resolutions passed, the Commission committed to strengthening the “unfinished agenda” of intraregional and interregional connectivity in Asia and the Pacific by reinforcing cooperation in the development of their strategies on maritime transport, international railways and Information Communication Technology (ICT) connectivity infrastructure.

In response to the evolving post-2015 development agenda, the Commission resolved to adapt its conference structure and establish a new Committee on Energy to assist in developing strategies towards attaining internationally-agreed development goals on energy, and to enhance energy security, with a view towards promoting greater use of sustainable energy resources. Recognizing the important contribution of disaster risk reduction to inclusive and sustainable development in the region, the Commission also agreed to create ESCAP’s sixth regional institution, the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management in Iran. The new Centre will help reduce risks and damages from natural hazards by building the capacities of countries in the region, and strengthening regional cooperation on information sharing and management of disaster risk reduction.

Dr. Akhtar emphasized that 2015 presents an unprecedented opportunity to decide on new paths to improve the lives of all people around the world, ahead of the General Assembly summit in September, where the UN post-2015 development agenda will be adopted.

“Our region is changing and the global development paradigm is being transformed,” said Dr. Akhtar. “To remain relevant and effective, and to provide the support our member States need to implement the post-2015 development agenda, ESCAP must change too. This week member States provided us with the mandates to make these changes.

“From meeting the needs of our most vulnerable countries, to women’s empowerment, gender equality and better management of regional natural resources, member States have entrusted the Commission with the responsibility to support their work in driving Asia-Pacific success in the next phase of global development,” Dr. Akhtar added.

The outcomes of the 71st Commission session will serve as the Asia-Pacific voice at the landmark development events of 2015, including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York from 26 June to 8 July, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July, the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, in New York from 25 to 27 September, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change from November 30 to 1 December in Paris.

Did you know?

- The population of Asia and the Pacific reached 4.3 billion people in 2014, equivalent to 60% of the world's total. While population growth in the region is often still described as a "demographic explosion", the growth rate for Asia and the Pacific, at 0.9% in 2014, was lower than the global population growth rate (1.1%). Additionally, the population growth rate continued to slow, from 1.4% during the period 1990-2000 to 1.0% during the period 2000- 2010. Yet, in absolute terms population increase remains immense, with 573.7 million people having been added to the population between 2000 and 2014.
- The combined urban population of China and India alone amounts to 1.2 billion and these two countries alone will add 696 million more urban residents by 2050. Based on current United Nations projections, the urban population of the Asia-Pacific region is expected to reach 3.2 billion by 2050. It is not surprising then that urbanization of Asia and the Pacific is characterized by the extraordinary growth of megacities, of more than 10 million people. In 2014, 17 of the world's 28 megacities were in this region, with many of them projected to grow into much larger urban agglomerations. Beyond today's megacities, the region in 2014 had 75 urban agglomerations with populations that exceeded three million.
- The share of urban population in the region has been rising steadily for the last 25 years. At 47.7% in 2014, the urbanization rate remains however below the world level of 53.6%. But the region is rapidly catching up and has maintained the second highest urban population growth rate of all regions (after Africa) with an annual growth of 2.6% since 1990.
- Every day an estimated 120,000 people are migrating to cities in the Asia-Pacific region and by 2050, the proportion of people living in urban areas is likely to rise to 63% when the urban population could be 3.3 billion.¹ The urban population growth rate is the result of natural population growth, rural to urban migration and the reclassification of rural areas into urban areas.
- From 1990 to 2014, the population of elderly persons (65 years and older) has nearly doubled (from 173 million to more than 330 million). During the same period, the population of children (0-14 years) declined slightly, hovering at 1 billion. By 2034, the elderly population is expected to double again and the child population to continue declining.
- In the region, sex-ratio imbalances in favour of males are among the highest in the world. Although the natural sex ratio at birth is 105 boys for every 100 girls, the ratio for the Asia-Pacific region stands at 110, bringing the global average to 107. This regional trend is influenced largely by China and India; the sex ratio at birth in these countries has increased from fewer than 108 boys per 100 girls in 1990 to the current level of 116.8 and 111.1, respectively.
- In 1990, 0.69% of all births occurring in the region's least developed countries ended in the death of the mother. By 2013, 0.22% of all births ended in the death of the mother - a reduction in such mortality of 68%; that improvement accounted for an estimated 34,000 lives saved. Infant mortality rates in Asia and the Pacific fell by 52% during the period 1990-2012, from 6.4% in 1990 to 3.1% in 2012. Thus, by 2012, of every 1,000 children born alive, 33 more children were surviving to their first birthday than had been the case in 1990. In 2013, the number of migrants – people born in one country but living in another one -- rose to 59.4 million in Asia and the Pacific, accounting for roughly one quarter of the world's total population of migrants.
- More than 1.4 billion people still live on less than US\$2 a day, 1.7 billion people still lack access to improved sanitation and 2 billion people lack access to adequate energy services. Health and gender goals are of particular concern. Seventy-five million children are underweight; and every year, nearly 3 million children die before their fifth birthday and more than 20 million women give birth without the support of a skilled attendant.
- More than 85 per cent of the people affected by disasters globally live in Asia or the Pacific.
- In Asia and the Pacific, the poorest 20 per cent of the population accounts for less than 10 per cent of national income; and the poorest households in the major developing economies are experiencing declines in their income.
- The Asian Highway Network, with 32 member countries, continued to expand between 2010 and 2012 from 142,804 km to 145,676 km. The region is home to some of the longest railway networks in the world. The Trans-Asian Railway Network now comprises 117,500 km of railway. Since 2009, CO2 emissions from transport in the Asia-Pacific region have superseded figures recorded for North America, which stood at nearly 1,839 million tons of CO2 in 2012.
- Mobile-cellular subscriptions per 100 population in Asia-Pacific grew rapidly from 15.6 in 2003 to 88.8 in 2013. However, the annual growth rate has been steadily falling from 29.4% in 2003 to 5.0% in 2013. In 2013, the regional average in mobile-cellular subscriptions per 100 population continued to lag behind the world average (92.6) and other developing regions, such as Latin America and the Caribbean (114.5). There are large inequalities among countries and subregions. For example, in 2013, there were 137.7 mobile-cellular subscriptions per 100 population in North and Central Asia. At the national level, Cambodia (133.9), Malaysia (144.7) and Thailand (138.0) were higher than the European average (124.5) for this indicator.

- The Asia-Pacific region has the lowest unemployment rate of any region, 4.6% in 2013, compared with the highest figure of 10.7% in Europe. However, youth unemployment was at 11.3% in 2013 for the region, following an increasing trend. Among the subregional groupings, Central Asia and South-East Asia had the highest rate of youth unemployment at 16.6% and 13.6%, respectively in 2013.
- The Asia-Pacific region has been one of the fastest growing regions in the world since the 1970s. The region grew at more than 4% on average, compared with a global average of 3%, until the global financial and economic crisis hit in 2008. Between 1970 and 2012, the region's real GDP rose from around \$3 trillion to over \$16 trillion. Similarly, real per capita income rose from \$1,379 in 1970 to \$3,947 in 2012.
- Asia and the Pacific remains the region with the highest number of natural disasters. Of the world's reported natural disasters between 2004 and 2013, 41.2%, or 1,690 incidences, occurred in the Asia-Pacific region. These figures were about the same as in the previous decade between 1994 and 2003, namely 41.5% or 1,582 incidences of natural disasters.¹
- The Asia-Pacific region had an estimated 588 million people that had no access to electricity in 2011.
- The volume of renewable water available each year per person in Asia and the Pacific has fallen by a fifth since 1997 to 4,815 m³ in 2012. The volume of renewable water available per person per year in Papua New Guinea is 111,762 m³, 1,270 times more than the 88 m³ available per person per year in the Maldives. Turkmenistan's annual withdrawal of 5,933 m³ of freshwater per person is nearly 400 times more than the 15 m³ annual withdrawal per person in the Maldives. Based on the latest data available (2010), over 90% of total water withdrawal in the countries of South and South-West Asia is for agriculture, compared with just over 20% in Europe.
- During the period between 1990 and 2010, the Asia-Pacific region was responsible for more than half of total global GHG emissions (52%). More than half of these emissions from within Asia-Pacific are coming from East and North-East Asia. In per capita terms, however, GHG emissions in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole are lower than the world average. In the first decade of this century, GHG emissions grew at an annual rate of 4.1%, nearly double the global rate (2.2%).
- The homicide rate in the Asia-Pacific region is 3 per 100,000 people, less than half the global average of 6 per 100,000 people. Homicide rates in North and Central Asia are the highest in the region and averaged 8.3 per 100,000 people in 2012. However, homicide rates in North and Central Asia have fallen by a fifth since 2008. The countries of Asia and the Pacific have some of the lowest homicide rates in the world, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, Japan and Singapore typically have homicide rates below 1 per 100,000 people.
- The overall percentage of undernourished people in the world dropped from 19% in 1990-1992 to 11% in 2012-2014. In China, the percentage of undernourished people dropped from 24% to 11% over the same period. Many countries in South-East Asia have also seen the proportion of undernourished people drop significantly between 1990 and 2014, for example: Cambodia (32% to 16%), Indonesia (20% to 9%), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (43% to 22%), Myanmar (63% to 17%), the Philippines (26% to 12%), Thailand (36% to 7%) and Viet Nam (46% to 13%). However, Asia and the Pacific accounts for more than 60% of the world's hungry people. The situation is worst in South Asia where the proportion of undernourished people stands at 16%.
- Around two thirds of women's employment in South Asia is in agriculture, while in East Asia the proportion is around 40%. Between 1990 and 2009, across the region, women's participation in non-agricultural wage employment increased only marginally, from 28% to 31%. Women are more likely than men to be informal workers in most Asia-Pacific countries.
- Access to improved water sources in Asia and the Pacific, however, has risen from 73% in 1990 to 92% in 2012. As would be expected, access is more prominent in urban areas, where the figure reached 97%, compared with 87% for rural areas. The significant improvement in access to safe water since 1990, however, is due largely to the enhancement in access in rural areas where access has risen from 62% to 87%, an increase of 25 percentage points. The equivalent increase for urban areas is 3 percentage points, from 94% to 97%.
- The estimated proportion of people in the Asia-Pacific region living on less than \$1.25 a day (2005 PPP) in 2011 is 18%, a significant drop from the estimated proportion in 1990, which was 52%. This proportion represents 772 million people living in extreme poverty throughout Asia and the Pacific in 2011, a significant reduction from more than 1.7 billion people living under the same circumstances in 1990.
- China is, by far, the largest investor in R & D in Asia and the Pacific, having spent more than \$213 billion (2005 purchasing power parity, or PPP) in 2012. Japan followed with investments close to \$133 billion in 2011 (2005 PPP). The Republic of Korea, India and the Russian Federation invested heavily in R & D, with \$55 billion (2011), \$32 billion (2011) and \$24 billion (2012), respectively.
- Between 2000 and 2012, the gross enrolment rate in pre-primary schools almost doubled, from 33.2% to 60.3%. The gross enrolment rate in tertiary education also grew more than two-fold, from 14.3% in 2000 to 29% in 2012. Participation in tertiary education in China more than quadrupled, from 6.6% in 1999 to 26.7% in 2012. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the rate increased from 2.3% in 1999 to 16.7% in 2012, a more than seven-fold increase.

- Total health expenditure as a share of GDP in the Asia-Pacific region increased by 17% from 1995 to 2012. Asian and Pacific countries spent an average of 6.7% of their GDP on health-related expenditures in 2012, exceeding the 6.1% average spent by African countries, but disbursing less than the 7.7% of GDP spent by Latin American countries and the 10.1% by European countries.
- Mobilizing adequate financial resources is one of the most important means of implementation for sustainable development. ESCAP estimates that investments of US\$2.1 trillion to \$2.5 trillion per year will be required to close infrastructure gaps, provide social protection (including health care and education) and address climate mitigation and adaptation needs.
- The number of tourists has increased in every country (for which data are available) of Asia and the Pacific in the 10 years from 2004 to 2013, with the exception of French Polynesia. And there have been year-on-year increases from 2012 to 2013 in 22 of the 27 countries for which data are available. Over the five years to 2013, the top-five destinations for tourists in Asia and the Pacific have been, in descending order of visits, China (57.7 million in 2012), Turkey (37.8 million in 2013), the Russian Federation (30.8 million), Thailand (26.7 million) and Malaysia (25.7 million).

Source: Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2014, UNESCAP

Historic labour standard adopted to tackle the informal economy

GENEVA (Source: International Labour Organization) – The International Labour Organization (ILO) has adopted a new international labour standard that is expected to help hundreds of millions of workers and economic units move out of informality and into the formal economy.

More than half of the world's workforce is estimated to be trapped in the informal economy, which is marked by the denial of rights at work, the absence of sufficient opportunities for quality employment, inadequate social protection, a lack of social dialogue and low productivity, all of which constitutes a significant obstacle to the development of sustainable enterprises.

The new Recommendation acknowledges that most people enter the informal economy not by choice but due to a lack of opportunities in the formal economy and an absence of any other means of livelihood.

The Recommendation – the first ever international labour standard specifically aimed at tackling the informal economy – was passed by 484 votes in favour and garnered outstanding support from the ILO's tripartite constituents.

The new labour standard provides strategies and practical guidance on policies and measures that can facilitate the transition from the informal to the formal economy.

What is an informal economy?

All economic activities by workers and economic units that are – in law or in practice – not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements. Activities are not included in the law, which means that they are operating outside the formal reach of the law; or they are not covered in practice, which means that – although they are operating within the formal reach of the law, the law is not applied or not enforced; or the law discourages compliance because it is inappropriate, burdensome, or imposes excessive costs.

The vote by the International Labour Conference is seen as a crucial step in assisting countries to set up the necessary measures to promote decent job creation and sustainable enterprises in the formal economy.

“Over the years we've seen a growing consensus between governments, workers and employers that the right thing to do is to move people from an informal to a formal employment situation. We know it is not easy, we know that these are processes are complicated and take time, but the great value of this Recommendation is that we now have an international framework of guidance to help member States bring this about,” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder.

“It is not just the adoption of this Recommendation, it's actually putting it into practice that will matter,” he added.

The Recommendation is of great significance for all those who are concerned with inclusive development, poverty eradication, reducing inequalities and who are looking forward to a strong focus on the goal of decent work for all in the context of the new post-2015 development agenda.

Objectives

The new international standard provides guidance for member States to:

- facilitate the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy, while respecting workers' fundamental rights and ensuring opportunities for income security, livelihoods and entrepreneurship.
- promote the creation, preservation and sustainability of enterprises and decent jobs in the formal economy and the coherence of macroeconomic, employment, social protection and other social policies, and
- prevent the informalization of formal economy jobs.

The Recommendation gives guidance for action in the form of 12 guiding principles. Countries' successful experiences formed the best practices that shaped the Recommendation, which accommodates diverse national situations and provides multiple approaches but remains universally relevant.

The extent of informality

The adoption of this Recommendation constitutes a historic landmark event for the world of work, as it points to the desired direction of many countries in making the transition to formality. It provides concrete guidance about the multiple pathways to achieve decent work and to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work for those in the informal economy.

"The new Recommendation is a major step forward in bringing the grey economy out of the shadows. It will help transform the informal economy, which has been particularly pervasive in developing economies. Importantly, it will facilitate the transition of the many million workers in the informal economy;

promote job creation in the formal economy and prevent further informalization," said Virgil Seafeld, Chair of Committee on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy and Chief Director for Advocacy and Statutory Services at the Department of Labour in South Africa.

Depending on the developing region, between 45 and 90 per cent of workers are in the informal economy. As concerns small and medium enterprises with 10 to 250 employees, as many as 90 per cent are informal.

The share of women in informal employment is higher than men in most countries, and other vulnerable populations, such as youth, ethnic minorities, migrants, older people and the disabled are also disproportionately present in informality.

The adoption of the Recommendation came as the ILO is gearing to close its 104th session, where once again government, employer and worker representatives have worked together to discuss and move forward on key world of work issues.

Sustainable transport essential to low carbon economy – UN panel

United Nations (Source: UN News Centre) – A high-level U.N. advisory group established by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, has agreed to take measures that could accelerate a shift toward safer, healthier, more efficient and sustainable transport systems. Meeting in Milan, Italy, on 12 June 2015, the High-Level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport agreed to develop a set of policy maker recommendations and to work to convene, in 2016, the first international conference on sustainable transport. Also in 2016, the Advisory Group will produce the first global, sustainable transport outlook report, which will contain all transport modes and important issues – including road safety, climate impacts, health issues and clean fuels.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo said: "We simply have to build better, safer and more sustainable transportation systems if we are going to promote prosperity and greater social well-being while protecting the environment."

Sustainable transport is an increasingly important concern in a rapidly urbanizing planet where 54 per cent of the population lives in cities according to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

With 1.3 billion cars, vans, trucks and buses currently on the world's roads, and all indications pointing to a continued pattern of motorization, the number of motor vehicles is expected to reach 1.6 billion by 2035. The transport sector is already responsible for nearly a quarter of all global energy-related emissions and transportation has been the largest energy consuming sector in 40 per cent of all countries.

Implications for the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

Tackling the informal economy poses an interesting challenge to the Human Resources departments of the tourism industry.

Tourism can contribute to this effort by undertaking a comprehensive survey at national and regional levels to provide some idea of the extent of the informal economy in the sector.

Millions of such informal economy workers most of them women, are employed in the souvenirs and handicrafts sector, in companies supplying agricultural products, as well as by mainstream tourism companies utilizing part-time services. While the issue is global, Asia and the Pacific has come into the limelight due to the overwhelming role of the informal economy in the region.

Upgrading their status will certainly have cost implications, but a successful outcome will enhance the image of tourism as a fair employer and attract more talent.

Companies that adopt this initiative will certainly gain a competitive advantage.

That can only be a good thing for the industry as a whole.

Implications for the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

Transportation is at the core of the Tourism sector

A safer, healthier, more efficient and sustainable transport sector will work wonders for uplifting the quality of the tourism experience system-wide.

It will make cities more livable, enhance productivity, reduce congestion and stress, amongst many other benefits.

Although each of the transport sectors (rail, road, sea and air) has its own individual plans and pathways to ensure safety, sustainability and efficiency, the issuance of the first global, sustainable transport outlook report will allow all modes to be included under one umbrella.

The rapidly growing Asian economies take a heavy toll on transport that is heavily dependent on fossil fuels with their high pollution rates. Taking a holistic and integrated approach to transport and sustainability in the tourism sector is a positive step forward.

The growing need for sustainable transport has gained prominence at the international level – such as at the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Brazil and the 2014 Climate Summit in New York. The need for sustainable transport is well integrated into the proposed development goals to be presented for adoption at the Sustainable Development Summit this September.

On the Advisory Group, Wu Hongbo elaborated that its purpose “is to provide recommendations to policy makers and business and civil society leaders that will help build sustainable transport systems that will effectively move people and goods while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and accidents at the same time.”

A Technical Working Group – comprised of experts from various UN organizations and non-UN institutions active in transport-related activities – provides technical and analytical inputs to the Advisory Group, which use them to base tier recommendations on sound technical foundations.

The increased need for sustainable transport has been increasingly important at the international level, at Rio+20 and at last September’s Climate Summit in New York. The need for sustainable transport is well integrated into the proposed sustainable development goals that will be presented for adoption at the Sustainable Development Summit this September.

Helping the world achieve universal health coverage

Washington DC, 12 June 2015 (Source: World Bank / World Health Organization) – Some 400 million people do not have access to health services and 6 per cent of people in low- and middle-income countries are tipped into or pushed further into extreme poverty because of the high cost of health spending, according to a report released by the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank Group.

“The world’s most disadvantaged people are missing out on even the most basic services,” Dr. Marie-Paule Kieny, WHO Assistant Director-General, Health Systems and Innovation, said in a joint WHO/World Bank statement.

“A commitment to equity is at the heart of universal health coverage,” continued Dr. Kieny. “Health policies and programmes should focus on providing quality health services for the poorest people, women and children, people living in rural areas and those from minority groups.”

The joint WHO/World Bank report, Tracking universal health coverage: First global monitoring report, is the first of its kind to measure health service coverage and financial protection to assess countries’ progress towards universal health coverage. Launched today, the report said more people have access to essential health services today than at any other time in history, and “for some health services, global population coverage already surpasses 80 per cent, and in the past decade there is some evidence that the proportion of people hit by health service-related catastrophic spending and impoverishment has dropped somewhat.”

Implications for the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

Health & wellness is a major business-generating customer segment in tourism

But it is only accessible to people with comfortable levels of income.

What can the tourism industry do to make it more widely available to the general population and thus contribute to global health & wellness?

Industry conferences on health & wellness should include this topic in their programmes, and brainstorm ideas to reduce the gap.

While health and wellness figure prominently in Asian Pacific tourism it must also pay attention to make UHC a priority for the future as the health of the population goes hand in hand with the success of sustainable tourism.

However, the report noted, “there is still a long way to go on the road to UHC [universal health coverage] both in terms of health service and financial protection coverage.”

The report looks at global access to essential health services – including family planning, antenatal care, skilled birth attendance, child immunization, antiretroviral therapy, tuberculosis treatment, and access to clean water and sanitation – in 2013, and found that at least 400 million people lacked access to at least one of these services.

In addition, across 37 countries, 6 per cent of the population was tipped or pushed further into extreme poverty (\$1.25/day) because they had to pay for health services out of their own pockets.

The World Bank’s Senior Director of Health, Nutrition and Population, Dr. Tim Evans, noted that the report “is a wakeup call.”

“It shows that we’re a long way from achieving universal health coverage,” Dr. Evans said. “We must expand access to health and protect the poorest from health expenses that are causing them severe financial hardship.”

This is the first in a series of annual reports that WHO and the World Bank Group will produce on tracking progress towards UHC across countries.

WHO and the World Bank Group recommend that countries pursuing universal health coverage should aim to achieve a minimum of 80 per cent population coverage of essential health services, and that everyone everywhere should be protected from catastrophic and impoverishing health payments, according to a joint press release.

Charting a path to eradicate world hunger, raise nutrition levels

Rome, 13 June 2015 (Source: Food & Agriculture Organization - FAO) – The FAO’s governing Conference today closed a week-long session during which Members, in record attendance, approved the agency’s biennial programme of work and budget and sent a strong signal of support for continuing the strategic direction charted out by Director-General José Graziano da Silva. The Conference formally approved a regular budget of \$1,035.7 million for delivery of FAO’s programme of work over the period 2016-2017.

Graziano da Silva in his closing statement to the Conference outlined FAO’s priorities for the coming years, in particular the eradication of hunger, raising levels of nutrition and addressing climate change.

“If FAO’s main mission is to end hunger and malnutrition, then FAO needs to offer holistic support, needs to support sustainable production and management of natural resources, needs to be able to offer support in social protection to reduce rural poverty,

needs to improve access to markets by family farmers and needs to help build resilience in rural populations,” he said.

The need to eradicate hunger was also underscored by Pope Francis when he met participants to the Conference during a special audience at the Vatican earlier in the week. In particular the Pontiff urged the creation of a sense of global solidarity to ensure food security for all people, the importance of reducing food waste and the provision of education on nutrition issues.

Implications for the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific

Food & Beverage directors, take note: The FAO has identified the following 10 Global Trends that will shape food supplies in the years ahead.

Trend 1: Food demand is increasing while patterns of food consumption are changing towards more livestock products, vegetable oils and sugar

Trend 2: Growing competition and diminishing quality and quantity of natural resources and loss of ecosystem services

Trend 3: Energy security and scarcity – the landscape and trends

Trend 4: Food price increases and price volatility

Trend 5: Changing agrarian structures, agro-industrialization and the globalization of food production

Trend 6: Changing patterns in agricultural trade and the evolution of trade policies

Trend 7: Climate change will have a growing impact in agriculture

Trend 8: Science and technology as a main source of agricultural productivity and production increases is progressively becoming a private good and the processes are dominated by the private sector

Trend 9: Evolving development environment: increased recognition of the centrality of governance and a commitment to country-led development processes

Trend 10: Increased vulnerability due to natural and man-made disasters and crisis

Asia Pacific tourism is directly affected by the above trends and mitigation measures to eradicate world hunger and raise nutritional levels will benefit the entire industry.

In its final report, the Conference “expressed ... support for the Director-General’s vision” and underlined “the importance of continuity in the strategic direction of the Organization in the Medium Term Plan 2014-2017”

FAO’s next Programme of Work and Budget “will consolidate our work on the (five) strategic objectives and will add emphasis to climate change and nutrition,” Graziano da Silva told Conference participants.

He also said that FAO would continue with its efforts to support South-South Cooperation - the sharing of experiences, policies, technology and resources between and among developing countries.

Today’s final Conference report also stressed the importance of consolidating decentralization efforts “on a region-specific basis”. Graziano da Silva said that he would press ahead with the process of change, including reinforcing FAO’s subregional offices “to improve our support in regions such as West Africa, Central Asia, the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean.”

“I want to assure you that we will continue to do this without weakening the technical and normative capacity at Headquarters,” the FAO Director-General, added

“This is not magic it is the result of streamlining administrative procedures, of cutting red tape so that we can do more and better with less,” he said.

This year’s meeting of the biennial Conference was attended by 191 delegations, the highest level of participation in the Organization’s history. These included 16 heads of states and government and 116 ministers. A total of 1,700 delegates attended the Conference.

The Conference awarded in a special ceremony 72 countries for having achieved the MDG target of halving the proportion of hungry people. Of these, 29 have also met the more stringent goal to halve the number of hungry people as laid out by governments when they met in Rome at the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996.

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