



Mainstreaming biodiversity into the tourism sector

The tourism sector is one of the major sectors in the global economy. It accounts for 9 per cent of the world's gross domestic product, 6 per cent of exports and contributes (directly or indirectly) to one in eleven jobs. In some developing countries, revenue from tourism can account for as much as 8 per cent of gross domestic product.

Nature-based tourism relies on biodiversity and diverse ecosystems to attract tourists. Opportunities to view biodiversity and ecosystems are a major draw for tourists. Visits to natural areas are estimated to account for 50 per cent of all leisure travel.

Tourism can contribute directly to the conservation of sensitive areas and habitats through a variety of activities such as park-entrance fees and by raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity. However, tourism can also negatively impact biodiversity if land and resources are strained by excessive use. While no Aichi Biodiversity Target directly addresses tourism, Aichi Biodiversity Target 4, which calls for steps to achieve plans for sustainable production and consumption to be taken, is relevant.

Impact of tourism on biodiversity

Tourist traffic, in particular in vulnerable habitats, can result in habitat degradation as well as pollution and waste. Further, the construction of additional infrastructure to cater to the needs of tourist, such as roads and lodging, can result in habitat loss and fragmentation. Conversely, nature-based tourism can help to generate awareness which is necessary to bring about the societal changes required to meaningfully address biodiversity. Similarly, revenue generated by biodiversity related tourism can also help to fund biodiversity conservation. For example, in some countries, tourism and visitation revenues constitute between 65 and 80 per cent of the annual funding of protected areas' agencies.

The tourism sector is growing rapidly. From 2011 to 2015, total international arrivals increased by 21 per cent. While not all of this increase relates to tourism focused on biodiversity, eco-tourism is an increasingly important segment of the tourism industry. The loss of biodiversity is therefore a threat to the continued vitality of the tourism industry in many countries.

The way forward

There are pathways for ensuring the long-term sustainability of tourism while also ensuring that it positively contributes to biodiversity. A number of key strategic actions for accomplishing this, and which will be further explored during the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, are discussed below.

A range of tools already exists to help manage the impacts of tourism on biodiversity. Tools range from policies, programmes and regulations to industry or voluntary standards developed by the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Tourism Organization, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature among others.



Coherent national policies, programmes and frameworks for sustainable tourism are needed. Such mechanisms are key in ensuring that biodiversity is given proper consideration in tourism activities. However, there is no single approach to mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into the tourism sector and actions will need to be tailored to national circumstances.

The tourism sector is composed of a diverse chain of services and products. Therefore, a multi-stakeholder approach is needed, one which engages relevant government ministries, local and subnational authorities, local stakeholders, the private sector and consumers.

Further possible actions for enhancing the mainstreaming of biodiversity in the tourism sector include the development and implementation of partnerships and financial instruments to complement and support public investment, raising awareness among tourists on the importance of sustainable travel, and enhancing monitoring, reporting, and knowledge sharing on tourism activities related to biodiversity.

Questions to guide the discussions:

- What are some specific positive examples of biodiversity mainstreaming in the tourism sector?
- What additional actions are needed to enable and support biodiversity mainstreaming in this sector? Budgetary, development of processes, legislation or policies actions?
- What are the biggest challenges and barriers to mainstreaming biodiversity into the tourism sector? What are the biggest opportunities we have now?
- Who are the main actors that have a key role to play in achieving biodiversity mainstreaming in this sector?