



22 MAY 2016  
**INTERNATIONAL DAY  
 FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**  
**Mainstreaming Biodiversity;**  
 Sustaining People and their Livelihoods

## Sustainable Tourism

With continued growth and deepening diversification, tourism has become one of the fastest growing economic sectors, particularly in least developed countries (LDC), in the world. And because tourism is closely linked to development, it has become a key driver for socio-economic progress. For areas of unique natural beauty that attract large numbers of visitors, a healthy biodiversity is one of tourism's greatest assets and fundamental to its long-term growth.

Tourism helps create jobs, promotes local culture and fuels development. Preliminary results in the first quarter of 2015, according to the World Tourism Organization, point to 1.18 billion international arrivals for the year, a 4 per cent increase over 2014, in a sector that generates 1 in 11 jobs globally, contributes about 10 per cent of the world's gross development product, and 6 per cent of the world's total exports. Tourism plays an especially crucial and increasing role in developing countries, which harbour the majority of the Earth's species, both as destinations and as new sources of tourists. China, for example, already represents the fastest-growing source of tourists in the world, while Mexico is among the top ten most visited tourism destinations.

Tourism can have a variety of negative impacts on biodiversity, particularly when there is no adequate management. Irresponsible and unsustainable tourism can damage nature through habitat destruction, overexploitation of local resources, waste and pollution, invasive alien species, infrastructure development, and greenhouse gas emissions. Tourists expect a clean environment and they will not return to polluted or degraded destinations, which will cause economic losses. Sustainable tourism, however, helps promote the intrinsic value of biodiversity and raises awareness of the importance of conservation, for example in the case of visitors to natural parks and protected areas. Sustainable tourism, or ecotourism, can also generate a pool of financial resources for local or national biodiversity preservation efforts. It can also be a driver of change in communities, opening the possibility of sustainable livelihoods notably



Convention on  
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COP12 / MOP7 / MOP1  
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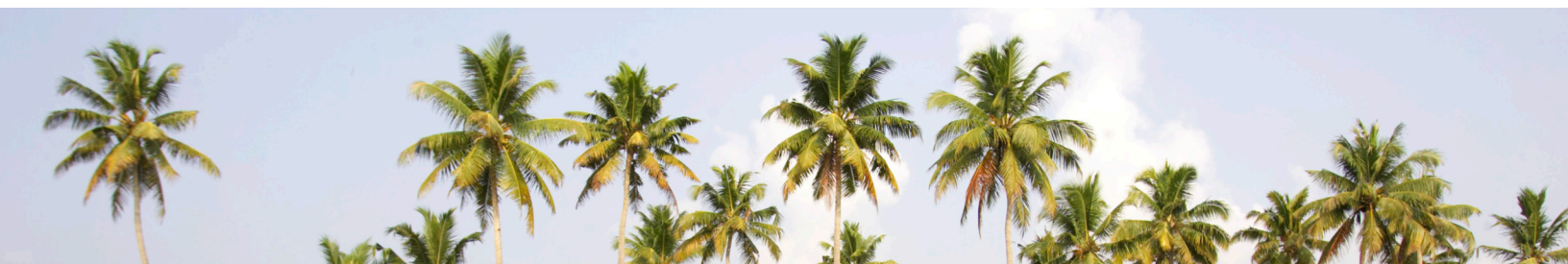
for women, who form the majority of the world's tourism workforce. In 2015, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognised sustainable tourism as a proponent of economic growth for both small island States and LDCs.

### **Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

The significance of tourism for biodiversity has been reflected in the Convention since the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 5) in 2000, where a decision (Decision V/25) by the Parties recognized the importance of tourism for social and economic development at local, national and regional levels, up to a decision (Decision XII/11) adopted by COP 12 in 2014, which, among other things, recognizes the ongoing relevance of the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development and invites Parties and stakeholders to promote awareness of sustainable travel choices.

### **Aichi Biodiversity Targets**

Tourism is of great relevance to at least 12 of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, a set of time-bound, measurable targets agreed by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010. For some Targets (5, 8, 9, 10 and 12) this is primarily about greater control and management to reduce damage to biodiversity from tourism. For example, with regards to Target 10 on minimizing anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, the restoration of more than 5,000 corals in Sistema Arrecifal Veracruzano National Park in Mexico will likely yield a positive impact on local tourism, which relies on ecosystem services (i.e. the natural beauty of coral reefs). For others (1, 11, 15, 18, and 20) this is about pursuing the positive contribution of tourism





to biodiversity awareness, protected areas, habitat restoration, community engagement, and resource mobilization. A further dimension is the better integration of biodiversity and sustainability into development policies and business models that include tourism, thereby supporting Aichi Targets 2 and 4.

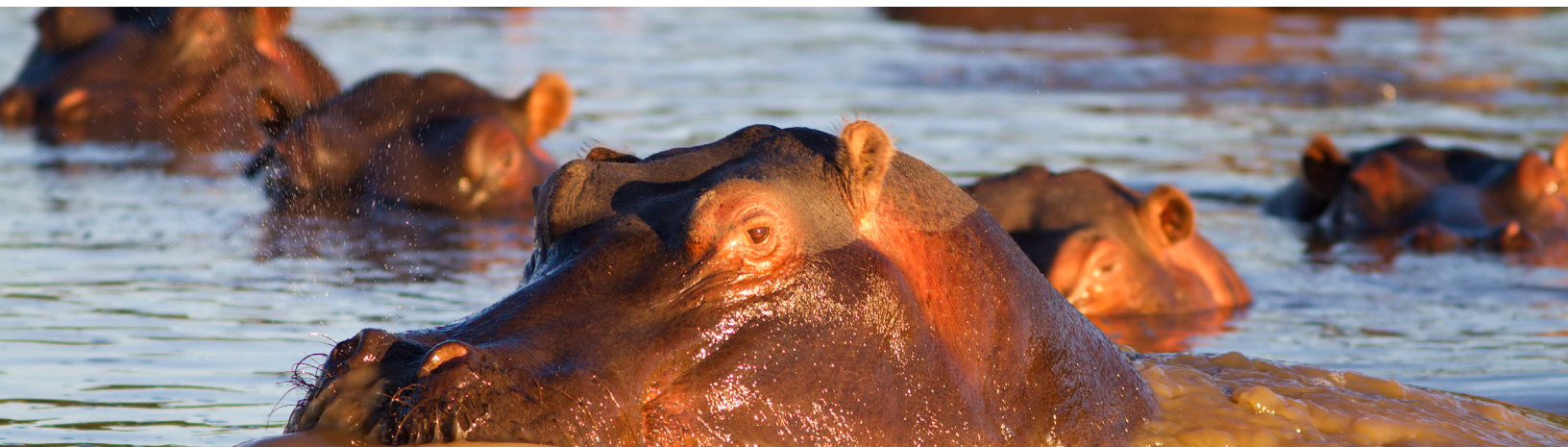
### **COP 13**

Sustainable tourism is expected to be discussed at the Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 13), being held in Cancun, Mexico, in December 2016, following the adoption of a decision on biodiversity and tourism development during COP 12. As well as reviewing progress towards the implementation of the Aichi Targets, participants can be expected to discuss strategic actions to enhance the mainstreaming of biodiversity in relevant economic sectors, including tourism.

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## Important links

- Convention on Biological Diversity: [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)
- Aichi Biodiversity Targets: [www.cbd.int/sp/targets](http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets)
- Global Biodiversity Outlook 4: [www.cbd.int/gbo4](http://www.cbd.int/gbo4)
- United Nations Decade on Biodiversity: [www.cbd.int/2011-2020](http://www.cbd.int/2011-2020)
- Biodiversity and Tourism: [www.cbd.int/tourism](http://www.cbd.int/tourism)
- CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development:  
[www.cbd.int/tourism/guidelines.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/tourism/guidelines.shtml)
- Tourism supporting Biodiversity - A Manual on applying the CBD:  
[www.cbd.int/tourism/doc/tourism-manual-2015-en.pdf](http://www.cbd.int/tourism/doc/tourism-manual-2015-en.pdf)

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