

**Committee:** United Nations Environment Programme

**Issue:** Ensuring environmental protection within the tourism industry.

**Student Officer:** Victoria Kaskampa

**Position:** President

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## WELCOMING LETTER

Dear Delegates of the United Nations Environment Programme,

My name is Victoria Kaskampa, I am a 17-year-old High School student and I will have the honour of serving you as one of the Presidents of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). My co-Chairs and I are delighted to welcome you to this year's simulation of the United Nations Environment Programme, an independent agency of the United Nations responsible for the coordination of all UN actions related to the environment.

You are all kindly advised and expected to study the Rules of Procedure of the UNEP committee, which can be found in the Delegates' Manual on the official website of the conference, as well as the Study Guides created by the Chairs of this committee very attentively, so that you will be able to deal with all sorts of procedural and substantial matters that may come up during our sessions. However, please note that the Study Guides are only meant to familiarize you with the topics, to help you grasp the general idea that is conveyed and, of course, to facilitate and guide your own research. Thus, you are all expected to do your own research on each topic after reading the guides, focusing mostly on the policy that the countries you are representing have adopted.

Please make sure to dedicate the biggest part of your research to the **possible solutions** that could effectively solve the issues at hand, bearing in mind that they should all be in agreement with the policies of the countries you are representing. Prior to the conference you are **all** expected to prepare a **draft resolution** that includes possible solutions to the issue that you would like to share and discuss with your fellow delegates during lobbying. At this point, I would like to remind you that the clauses of your resolutions should be original, meaning that plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you wish to use any possible solutions from the Study Guide or official UN resolutions, please make sure to further elaborate on them and paraphrase them in order to avoid the possibility of plagiarism.

Should you have any questions on the topic of "Ensuring environmental protection within the tourism industry", you can always contact me via e-mail at [victoriakaskaba@hotmail.com](mailto:victoriakaskaba@hotmail.com). I will be more than willing to provide you with any kind of explanation you may need. See you all at Arsakeia- Tositseia Schools Model United Nations 2018 in November!

Kind regards,

Victoria Kaskampa.

## INTRODUCTION

Taking into account that tourism is immediately related to social, cultural, political and environmental issues, it goes without saying that the tourism industry is the largest and most complex industry in the world and it constitutes the main source of income, employment and private sector growth for many countries<sup>1</sup>. For many years, tourism was considered as a “white industry”<sup>2</sup>, harmless to the environment in which it developed, mostly because it was not aiming at the production of tangible products and goods; instead, the goal was to offer high-quality services and travel packages to potential tourists, with a view to enabling worldwide trips.

Tourism, nowadays, is an industry with a global economic contribution (direct, indirect and induced) of over 7.6 trillion U.S. dollars in 2016. The direct economic impact of the industry, including accommodation, transportation, entertainment and attractions, was approximately 2.3 trillion U.S. dollars that year<sup>3</sup>. Thus, it was only natural for countries, such as France and the United States, consistently popular tourism destinations, and other European and Asian countries to reap the economic benefits of the industry.

However, time and again the tourism industry has been accused of generating intense environmental problems due to the activities and the services it offers. The construction of transportation routes, accommodation, hotel chains, restaurants and amusement spaces, as well as the extensive use of means of transport have all resulted in the exhaustion of local natural resources and overall pollution; forest fires, destruction of native vegetation and flora, scattering of waste in coastal waters and open spaces, endangerment of wildlife, disruption of biodiversity, improper waste-disposal facilities made by tourist organizations and irreparable damage to archaeological, historical and cultural sites are only a few tourism-caused factors responsible for environmental destruction. This phenomenon not only reduces the quality of life for locals and tourists, but is also likely to threaten the viability of the tourist industry itself<sup>4</sup>.



Fortunately, in the last few years the tourism and travel industry seems to have made a change of heart. Acknowledging the fact that people enjoy traveling more when they explore pristine landscapes, visit national and natural parks and cultural sites and benefit themselves with a light educational experience during the trip, tourist businesses and organizations have started placing their attention to the newly developed alternative forms of tourism such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism. In that sense, we could all agree that

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<sup>1</sup> Asadzadeh, Ali, and Mir Sajjad Seyyed Mousavi. “The Role of Tourism on the Environment and Its Governing Law.” *Electronic Journal of Biology, IMedPub*, 28 Apr. 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Toncheva, Todorka. “Eco- Tourism as a Tool for Ensuring Sustainable Tourism Goals.” *Economic Alternatives*, 2014, [www.unwe.bg/uploads/Alternatives/10\\_Toncheva.pdf](http://www.unwe.bg/uploads/Alternatives/10_Toncheva.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Jaaskelainen, Liisa. “Topic: Global Tourism Industry.” *Statista*, [www.statista.com/topics/962/global-tourism/](http://www.statista.com/topics/962/global-tourism/)

<sup>4</sup> Muhanna, Emaad. “Emaad Muhanna (2006). *Sustainable Tourism Development and Environmental Management for Developing Countries. Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 4(2).” *Businessperspectives.org*, 2006.

trips and holidays to foreign areas are more enjoyable when the environment is not harmed by our presence or the ongoing tourist activities.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Tourism

The act and process of spending time away from home in pursuit of recreation, relaxation and pleasure, while making use of the commercial provision of services by tourism businesses. (Walton, John K. "Tourism." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Inc., 20 Mar. 2015.)

### Ecotourism

Definition articulated by the World Conservation Union (IUCN): "Environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promotes conservation, has a low visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples." (*"What Is Ecotourism? | The Nature Conservancy"*.)

### Environmental protection

Refers to any activity to maintain or restore the quality of environmental media through preventing the emission of pollutants or reducing the presence of polluting substances in environmental media. It may consist of:

- a) changes in characteristics of goods and services,
- b) changes in consumption patterns,
- c) changes in production techniques,
- d) treatment or disposal of residuals in separate environmental protection facilities,
- e) recycling,
- f) prevention of degradation of the landscape and ecosystems. (*OECD Statistics Directorate. "OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms - Environmental Protection Definition"*)

### Environmental law

Body of rules and regulations, orders and statutes, concerned with the maintenance and protection of the natural environment of a country. It provides basis for measuring and apportioning liability in cases of environmental crime and the failure to comply with its provisions. (*"What Is Environmental Law? Definition and Meaning."* *BusinessDictionary.com*)

### Tourism industry

Complex industry that involves a broad range of businesses, organizations and government agencies. They work together at different levels to deliver a complete tourism package. Each party in the chain contributes to the overall holiday

experience of the customer - from initial destination marketing through to the ground level experience. ("THE BROADER TOURISM INDUSTRY." *TOURISM DISTRIBUTION* | *Tourism Council of WA*).

### **Sustainable tourism**

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. (*Definition* | *World Tourism Organization UNWTO*.)

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **History of tourism**

Although nowadays there is no clear distinction between tourism and travel, it would be a travesty to think that these two terms have always coincided. On the one hand, tourism is a relatively new phenomenon that does not appear until the mid-1950s, with a view to globalizing worldwide trips and combining them with the consumption of products, and it mostly aims to entertain and amuse tourists. In that context, it is no wonder that during the 20th century the first artificial theme parks were created, which started offering events and experiences to visitors and were internalized as adventure and fun. On the other hand, travel goes as far back as the Ancient Greek and the Ancient Egyptian times and reappears during the Renaissance and Enlightenment period only to get its first boost thanks to the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, holidays have always been considered sacred, as the term stands for "holy days", short period of time designated by the holy book of modern religions during which all actions should be channeled in holy purposes.

From 1830-1950<sup>5</sup>, the global community witnesses the developments, structures and innovations that led to the popularization and diversification of travel and the birth of modern mass tourism; the advance of industrialization, demographic changes, urbanization, transport revolution, improvement of social and labour rights, increasing income and rising consumer demand were all a result of the opening of the Central European system of transport in the beginning of the 19th century that facilitated the mobility of tourists and new trends. The 1990s is, undoubtedly, the golden decade of modern tourism thanks to globalization. Holidays and travel are now becoming widely accessible to all classes of the population, in contrast with the 1950s, when only state employees, white-collar workers, graduates and urban workers were entitled to trips; the rural population and social groups are now joining the tourism "movement" as well.

### **Effects of tourism on the environment**

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<sup>5</sup> The History of Tourism: "Structures on the Path to Modernity Tourism." *EGO* | *Europäische Geschichte Online*.

Tourism development can put pressure on natural resources when it increases consumption in areas where resources are already scarce<sup>6</sup>. Fresh and potable water has always been a vital natural resource that is now overused by the tourism industry that supplies hotels, swimming pools and golf fields; this can result in water shortages and exhaustion of water supplies, as well as an increase in water waste in dry tourist regions like the Mediterranean. Because of the hot climate and the tendency of tourists to consume more water when on holiday than they do at home, the amount used can reach 440 liters a day<sup>7</sup>.

Land degradation, desertification and deforestation are the results of conventional tourism. Extensive construction for the provision of accommodation and tourist facilities requires building materials and land, both provided through the recurrent exploitation of the environment.

Transport emissions and emissions from energy production and use are linked to acid rain, global warming and photochemical pollution. Air pollution from tourist transportation has impacts on a global level, especially from carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions related to transportation energy use. Especially in very hot or cold countries, tour buses often leave their motors running for hours while the tourists go out for an excursion because they want to return to a comfortably air-conditioned bus. At the same time, noise pollution from airplanes, cars, and buses, as well as recreational vehicles such as snowmobiles and jet skis, is an ever-growing problem of modern life. In addition to causing annoyance, stress, and even hearing loss for humans, it causes distress to wildlife, especially in sensitive areas.

Improper waste-disposal mechanisms can seriously damage the natural environment - rivers, scenic areas, and roadsides. "Cruise ships in the Caribbean are estimated to produce more than 70,000 tons of waste each year. Today some cruise lines are actively working to reduce waste-related impacts. Solid waste and littering can degrade the physical appearance of the water and shoreline and cause the death of marine animals. In mountain areas, trekking tourists generate a great deal of waste, as they tend to leave behind their garbage, oxygen cylinders and even camping equipment".

### **Forms of alternative tourism**

Rural tourism<sup>8</sup> is characterized as a stay in the countryside with access to a farm and interaction with the locals. These stays can be part of a round trip, a weekend trip or a longer staying. In all cases, the tourist is expected to take part in the daily activities of the locals from gathering fruits and vegetables from the farm, cooking traditional foods, celebrating local holidays, to watching or learning traditional crafts or agricultural and folkloric traditions. Most of the time, these activities are combined with

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<sup>6</sup> "ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF TOURISM." *Urban Waste Management*, [www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/envi/one.html](http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/envi/one.html).

<sup>7</sup> "ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF TOURISM." *Urban Waste Management*, [www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/envi/one.html](http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/envi/one.html).

<sup>8</sup> "Forms of Alternative Tourism." *ALTERNATIVE TOURISM*, 10 Dec. 2015.

other tourist practices such as hikes, cycling, horse riding, visiting monasteries, museums, archaeological sites or other landmarks.

Ecotourism<sup>8</sup> is based on the observation of nature and forms a new connection between the tourism operators, travel agencies, local communities, organizations, protected areas, scientific communities etc. Among the goals of ecotourism are minimizing the negative impact of tourism on the environment, informing the tourists about local regulations, participating in regional nature conservation programs and influencing visitors' behavior. Various programs of ecotourism are conducted in countries with a well-preserved biodiversity and well-managed natural parks.



Adventure tourism<sup>8</sup> is a combination of new tourist practices related to the relationship the tourist has with nature. This type of tourism differs from season to season and it has young people and people working in stressful environments as its followers. Lately, adventure tourism activities, such as hiking, skiing, snowboarding, rafting, sky-diving etc have been gaining ground over other types of mass tourism or alternative tourism. The dynamic development of this sector of alternative tourism is the fastest in the world.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

### MAJOR COUNTRIES

#### Egypt

For several years, coral reefs in the Red Sea have been viewed as highly considerable Egyptian tourism assets, as they constitute the second most biologically diverse ecosystem after tropical rainforests. Although tourism development in Hurghada started in the late 1980s, an integrated coastal management was not installed until a decade later, resulting in damage of natural resources and subsequent degeneration in the coral reefs. Nowadays, the fifty genres of corals in the Red Sea are threatened by human tourist activity in the area, as it is considered as one of the best locations for scuba-diving. The latter along with collecting coral parts result in broken corals, while the construction of resorts releases dust that suffocates coral areas. Finally, the overall coral deterioration disturbs the coastal ecosystem and leads to fish reduction in the area, proving that human activity has damaged 73% of coral reefs in Egypt and 90% globally<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Zainub Ibrahim, "Tourism Development and the Environment on the Egyptian Red Sea Coast", University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2009.

## China

China has been witnessing the rapid development of the tourism industry since 1980 with the extensive exploitation of its natural and cultural environment for tourism. As far as vegetation is concerned, tourism impacts include biodiversity loss, deterioration of the community structure and a decrease in plant productivity or even extinction. Studies on fir forests revealed that fir mortality was extremely high in places popular to visitors, caused by air and soil pollution, tourist wastes, construction of tourism infrastructure and tourism trampling, while construction of tourism facilities has brought about significant ecological impacts on the tundra zone. As for the Chinese wildlife, the disturbance of their natural habitats and behaviours has resulted in a sharp reduction<sup>10</sup> in wildlife population that subsequently instigates changes in the food network and shortens food chains. After all, tourist activities in China are known to interfere with birds' and animals' life and habitats.

## Mediterranean countries

Spain, France, Italy and Greece receive almost 80% of Mediterranean tourism<sup>11</sup>. Tourism has a direct negative impact on biodiversity, directly affecting rare and endangered species. Over 500 plant species in the Mediterranean are on the verge of extinction and are under intense pressure from tourism development in some overbuilt destinations. In Zakynthos (Greece), sea turtles have had their coastal nesting grounds disturbed and destroyed by tourism development and tourist behaviour. Tourism's impact on the critically endangered Mediterranean monk seal has been particularly devastating, given that monk seals need suitable cave and beach habitats in order to breed successfully - areas that are exploited by the tourism industry. Because of that, the decline and extinction of Mediterranean monk seal populations in several key areas including France, Corsica, Spain, the Balearic Islands, Croatia, Italy, Sardinia and Tunisia is alarming.



## MAJOR ORGANIZATIONS

### European Union

The European Union (EU) has multiply expressed its desire to turn European conventional tourism into a more sustainable one. Through the European Commission, which co-funds sustainable transnational tourism products, the EU manages to diversify the tourism experiences on offer that can contribute to tourism growth. The Commission has also developed the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS), a simple method for measuring sustainability performance, as well as the EU Ecolabel, a voluntary tool that is available to tourism accommodation services willing to prove and promote their environmental

<sup>10</sup> L. Zhong et al. / Journal of Environmental Management 92 (2011) 2972-2983

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.monachus-guardian.org/library/wwftou01.pdf>



excellence<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, the EU has been funding the “Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism” (MEET)<sup>13</sup> Project, a project that aims at giving a voice to Mediterranean protected areas.

### United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as the leading global environmental authority within the United Nations system, promotes the environmental dimension of sustainable development and serves as the authoritative advocate for the global environment<sup>14</sup>. UN Environment aims to mainstream sustainability into tourism development by demonstrating the economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits of sustainable tourism, it supports governments and other institutional stakeholders at local, regional and international levels and, lastly, it promotes sustainable consumption and production patterns in the tourism value chain<sup>15</sup>.

### United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

UNWTO has been involved in the field of ecotourism since the early 1990s, developing a set of guidelines focusing on the strong link between protected areas and tourism, with a view to ensuring that tourism contributes to the purposes of protected areas and does not undermine them. In the framework of the UN-declared International Year of Ecotourism (IYE)



2002, UNWTO<sup>16</sup> undertook a wide range of activities, including the organization of regional conferences and the World Ecotourism Summit and published guidelines and methodologies for ecotourism development and market studies, while supporting regional and national activities. At the request of the United Nations General Assembly, the World Tourism Organization prepared a report on the activities undertaken by States and major international organizations in the framework of the International Year of Ecotourism.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
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<sup>12</sup> “Sustainable Tourism - Growth - European Commission.” *Social Protection Statistics - Unemployment Benefits - Statistics*

<sup>13</sup> MEET | Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism, [www.medecotourism.org/default.asp](http://www.medecotourism.org/default.asp).

<sup>14</sup> Ecotourism in Botswana | Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference, [www.ecotourismconference.org/news/unep](http://www.ecotourismconference.org/news/unep).

<sup>15</sup> “Tourism.” *UN Environment*

<sup>16</sup> “Ecotourism and Protected Areas | World Tourism Organization UNWTO.” *Home | World Tourism Organization UNWTO*.



17 <sup>th</sup> Century	Travel in Western Europe
End of 18 <sup>th</sup> Century	Coinage of the word “tourist”
1812	First steam navigation in Scotland
1901	World’s first national tourism office in New Zealand
1946	The First International Congress of National Tourism Bodies, meeting in London, decides to create a new international non-governmental organization to replace the International Union of Official Tourist Propaganda Organizations (IUOTPO), established in 1934.
1947	The First Constitutive Assembly of the International Union of Official Travel Organisations (IUOTO) is held in The Hague. The temporary IUOTO headquarters are established in London.
1967	The United Nations, following an IUOTO initiative, declares 1967 International Tourist Year (ITY), with the slogan Tourism, Passport to Peace.
27/9/1970	Adoption of UNWTO Statutes
27/9/1980	1 <sup>st</sup> World Tourism Day
1987	The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) issues “Our Common Future”
1992	Rio Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).
2002	International Year of Ecotourism (IYE).
2008	UNWTO and other UN agencies present the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria at the World Conservation Congress, Barcelona (Spain)
2009	In response to the global economic crisis, the UNWTO Roadmap for Recovery is developed, demonstrating how tourism can contribute to economic recovery and the long term transformation to the Green Economy.
2010	First T.20 Ministers’ Meeting underscores tourism’s contribution to global economic recovery and the long-term ‘green’ transformation.

2017	International Year Of Sustainable Tourism For Development.
06/7/2018	Collaboration and political support providing Cote d' Ivoire with sustainable tourism opportunities.
By 2020	350 million tourists will be visiting the Mediterranean coastal region alone <sup>17</sup> .

## UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- In 2012, the Second Committee (Economic and Financial) of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the **resolution A/C.2/67/L.30/Rev.1 on the “Promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection.”**<sup>18</sup>
- In 2014 the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution on the **“Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection.” (A/RES/69/233)**<sup>18</sup>
- In 2017 the UN General Assembly adopted the **Resolution 72/214: Sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America**<sup>19</sup>, which highlights the key elements of sustainable tourism such as biodiversity and cultural heritage protection, the empowerment of children, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, as well as the promotion of indigenous and local communities through sustainable tourism.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Recent studies have shown that the most considerable worldwide issue of modern times is the environmental destruction; therefore it is high time the tourism industry started placing its attention on environmental protection.

**Green building** is the key to the construction of ecologically-friendly hotels, accommodation and tourist amusement spaces, meaning that from now on the extensive use of energy efficient and non-polluting construction materials, sewage systems and energy resources should be encouraged within the construction industry.

The **creation of national and wildlife parks** is imperative for the protection of pristine sites and natural areas. The entrance fees will undoubtedly increase national revenue and, subsequently, a large part of the fees will be used for the preservation of these sites.



<sup>17</sup> World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2004

<sup>18</sup> “Ecotourism and Protected Areas | World Tourism Organization UNWTO.” *Home | World Tourism Organization UNWTO*, [www2.unwto.org/content/ecotourism-and-protected-areas](http://www2.unwto.org/content/ecotourism-and-protected-areas).

<sup>19</sup> “Sustainable Development of Tourism.” *Ecotourism and Protected Areas | Sustainable Development of Tourism*, [sdt.unwto.org/unga-sustainable-tourism-resolutions](http://sdt.unwto.org/unga-sustainable-tourism-resolutions).

**Limited access** to pure natural sites still unharmed by mankind's globalist tourism development activities and denial of all construction requests.

Encouragement of **ecotourism** through public events meant to raise awareness and educate the local communities on how to utilize renewable energy resources, on the importance of recycling as a means to sustainability and, lastly, on the creation of efficient waste-disposal mechanisms.

For developing countries, it would be advisable to encourage the **exchange of experts** between local communities and organizations operating there or developed countries that have already resolved the issue and can share their expertise.

The level, pace and shape of development should reflect and respect the character, resources and needs of host communities and destinations and all **stakeholders** should be involved, as a sustainable approach requires widespread and committed participation in decision making and practical implementation by all those implicated in the outcome<sup>20</sup>.

In order to minimize and manage risk, it is indispensable to obey the **precautionary principle**; in case of uncertainty about outcomes, there should be full evaluation and preventative action to avoid damage to the environment or society.

It is imperative to enhance and establish **sustainable community tourism**, which aims to promote the fair distribution of economic benefits among community residents.

This can be achieved through the promotion of full community participation in the development process and the provision of national and international support. Government support includes the strengthening of training programs, the provision of low-interest loans, and cooperation among local, regional, and national government agencies, industries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and residents (UN 2001).

The foremost objectives of **education** are to increase visitor awareness and to modify travel behavior and attitude, by familiarizing tourists, before visiting a region with the culture, society and the nature of the destination, as well as with a code of ethics. Thus, education can foster an appreciation for the human and natural culture among local residents and stakeholders and instill community pride.

**Planning** of sustainable tourism must seek to maintain the current appeal of the community destination, reduce the negative impact, optimize positive benefits, and achieve community goals and objectives. In addition, the goals of community-based tourism are to empower community residents, encourage resident participation in the decision-making process, and distribute revenue from tourism to community residents<sup>21</sup>.



<sup>20</sup> "EUR-Lex Access to European Union Law." EUR-Lex - 31995L0046 - EN, OPOCE, eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/

<sup>21</sup> "Measuring Residents' Attitude toward Sustainable Tourism: Development of Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale", Hwan-Suk Chris Choi and Ercan Sirakaya, Journal of Travel Research 2005

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