

FIRST GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT ON TOURISM



Tourism grows faster than the global economy, and it is also contributing to a more significant amount of carbon emissions. A recent global assessment has highlighted the industry's achievements and shortcomings in addressing climate change. Furthermore, the industry is at risk from the effects of climate change.

To address these issues, a team of experts from over 30 countries has comprehensively investigated climate protection and tourism. The result is an inventory of the industry's progress and failures and a framework comprising **40 quantitatively measurable criteria to guide future efforts to achieve a better climate balance in this economic sector.**

Tourism is Growing Faster than the Global Economy

The report has compiled trends and facts on the tourism industry. It reveals that the wanderlust business is growing faster than the global economy, trending towards longer and more emission-intensive travel.

Unfortunately, the industry is directly and indirectly responsible for 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, tourism hotspots often suffer from regional problems such as water shortages or heat waves, and holidaymakers waste scarce resources like water or energy for cooling. Despite these issues, many countries promote tourism because it contributes to economic development.

However, growing tourism also leads to more greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Between 1995 and 2019, emissions from tourist traffic increased by 65 percent. Air travel is the main culprit, accounting for 26 percent of all national and international tourist trips and causing 75 percent of emissions.

On the other hand, rail is the lowest-emission means of transport in tourism, even though many places still use fossil fuels. The decarbonization of rail transport requires clean electricity, which, unfortunately, is lacking in many countries.

Although the greenhouse gas intensity of hotel operations is gradually improving in some regional markets, it will not be able to reduce emissions by 50 percent by 2030 as necessary without acceleration and global expansion. The energy demand per room remained constant, suggesting that the emission reduction is due to the decarbonization of the power supply rather than lower energy consumption in the hotel.

Only a few high-income countries and destinations are responsible for most global tourism emissions. Italy, Mexico, and Thailand are among the top emitters among the 50 countries with vital tourism sectors.

Climate Justice Falls by the Wayside

People from wealthy countries tend to contribute to a lot of carbon emissions, which can hurt

countries that don't have the resources to deal with the consequences. Countries already struggling with issues like poverty, unsustainable tourism, and climate change hazards often find achieving the Sustainable Development Goals challenging.

This can worsen the effects of climate change in island and mountain destinations in low- and middle-income countries. In cases where there are no other options for economic development beyond tourism, it is essential to provide support for those who have lost their livelihoods due to the decline in tourism.

The Tourism Industry is at Risk from Climate Change

The consequences of climate change has impacted the tourism industry. It has been concluded that in some destinations, the current forms of tourism will no longer be possible due to the effects of climate change. While measures for adaptation and resilience are being implemented in plans and strategies, they tend to be fragmented, short-term, and not evenly distributed across regions and destination types.

According to a report, tourism policy is not yet systematically integrated into the global and national climate change frameworks. It is not considered in climate protection plans in many countries where tourism accounts for a significant portion of their economies. Policies also fail to address the need to reduce emission-intensive forms of tourism and do not encourage developing and selecting low-carbon products.

Aviation to Be Integrated into Climate Protection Plans

The challenge of effective policy to reduce emissions is due to the separate treatment of domestic and international aviation and cruise ships at international and national levels. Although sustainability is becoming more critical at the destination, the travel to reach it is often neglected.

Furthermore, governments worldwide are investing billions in infrastructure that is highly vulnerable to climate change and produces high greenhouse gas emissions. Most of these funds are allocated for airport projects. Additionally, the travel industry's transition to low-carbon is hindered by \$732 billion worth of fossil fuel subsidies given globally.

Travel Industry Should Protect Its Assets - Nature

The report states that no country or destination has been able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly. However, there is an urgent need to build on the progress and innovative solutions identified in the inventory.

Isabel Hill, the former director of the National Travel and Tourism Office in USA, believes the travel industry needs to understand the significant risks of climate change to its fundamental assets, such as people, planet, and infrastructure.

The sector should prioritize taking action to adapt to the rapidly changing conditions and prevent further damage. This is the only way for the industry to remain economically sustainable and continue to be a force for good.

In 2021, the climate summit in Glasgow formulated climate targets for the tourism industry. These targets include halving emissions by 2030 and making the sector climate-neutral by 2050. To advance climate protection knowledge and action in the travel and tourism industry, an international association of scientists and tourism experts, known as the Tourism Panel on Climate Change

(TPCC), was constituted in 2022.

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