

Research Report

COMMITTEE: UN Habitat

ISSUE: How can tourism-dependent coastal regions adapt to climate change impacts?

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How can tourism-dependent coastal areas adapt to climate change impacts?



INTRODUCTION

Hello everyone.

My name is Louis Arnoult, I am 17 years old and a student in Terminale at the Lycée Français de Barcelone.

Besides debating in MUN, one of my greatest passions is music. I have played the violin since I was six years old and continue to play to this day. I am very excited to be chairing the UN habitat committee alongside my co-chair Marina Perez Barrera. This is my second year participating in MUN: last year I participated as the delegate of Sweden for the International Labor organization. This year, we will be tackling the urgent issue of ensuring that coastal regions threatened by climate change receive the support of the international community to adapt to these modern challenges.

KEY WORDS

Tourism: Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or professional purposes. These people are called visitors (who may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism is the total quantity of their activities and expenditure.

Climate change: Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. In recent years, this has been caused by an increase in greenhouse gas emissions by humans over the past two centuries.

Small Island developing States (SIDS): this is a distinct group of states that face unique social economic and environmental vulnerabilities. They represent 65 million people. Given their remote geography they face high import / export costs, their EEZ (exclusive economic

zone) is on average 28 times bigger than the country’s landmass, their isolation forces them to rely on their marine ecosystem, and they suffer greatly from biodiversity loss.

Blue economy: According to the World Bank, the blue economy is the "sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem."

OVERVIEW

Tourism is a climate dependent industry and an important contributor to the world economy. According to the WTTC, the tourism industry represents up to 10.4% of the global GDP and accounts for 10.6% of jobs around the world (some 334 million). This makes this a priority industry when it comes to global initiatives. However, it is worth pointing out that some specific regions (generally speaking, coastal regions and small countries, often SIDS) can have a much more tourism dependent economy. In particular, the region of the Caribbean is hugely reliant on tourists to maintain its economy. As of 2015, it was estimated that the Caribbean region received 53 billion dollars annually from tourists which created 709 000 jobs. With a steadily improving standard of living worldwide, particularly in developed countries, the industry is expected to continue to grow over the following years. Small countries in regions like the Pacific also greatly rely on tourism to sustain their economies and, in particular SIDS, which face troubles in developing their other industries due to their small size and isolation, greatly rely on tourism.

10 countries most reliant on tourism

Country	% of GDP
Maldives	38.92
British Virgin Islands	32.96
Macao	28.05
Aruba	27.64
Seychelles	25.74
The Bahamas	19.23
Vanuatu	18.16
Cabo Verde	17.66
St. Lucia	15.61
Belize	14.95

Furthermore, coastal regions are densely populated, making them of greater importance to the international community. Studies find that these regions, although representing 2% of the world’s surface, represent 10% of its population and 13% of the world’s urban population as important cities tend to be situated near the coast to facilitate

trade. This phenomenon seems to be even more pronounced in least developed countries where studies show that these countries have 14% of their population and 21% of their urban population living in coastal regions, a much greater percentage compared to the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, which have 10% of their total population and 11% of their urban population near coastal regions. This greater demographic concentration in least developed countries represents a more significant issue when debating policies as these countries will be prone to have a greater percentage of their population affected by climate change while at the same time not possessing the same means as developed countries to adapt to these threats.

However beneficial to these countries' economies tourism may be, it poses great strains on their natural resources which are already suffering from the effects of rapid climate change across the world. In most cases, countries dependent on tourism do not possess the technology and economic means to face the increasing challenges posed by climate change. Conscious of these dangers, many SIDS have taken measures to combat climate change and reduce their impact on the environment. However, this is relatively futile as these countries tend to contribute very little to global greenhouse emissions and suffer more damage.

There is rapid acidification of oceans (global Ph levels have shifted from 8.1 to 7.9) or rising sea levels that are evident every year in places such as Florida where studies have found that the region is losing its coastline at an unprecedented rate. One academic paper, in particular, said: "The estimates of global mean sea-level rise in the Special Report on Emissions Scenarios of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) range from 22 centimeters to 34 centimeters, between 1990 and the 2080s. Far faster sea level rise (more than a meter per century) could result from the accelerated melting of the Greenland ice sheet or the collapse of the West Antarctic ice sheet, although this is not considered likely during the twenty-first century. It has been estimated that, in the absence of any other changes, a sea-level rise of 38 centimeters would increase five-fold the number of people flooded by storm surges." Climate change poses other threats to these regions, notably more violent storms. The region of the Caribbean suffers greatly since hurricanes become more violent with warmer weather. This is apparent in the devastation caused by hurricane Dorian in 2019, which, according to the CNBC, caused between 1.5 to 3 billion dollars in damages, in addition to the humanitarian cost of such recurring disasters.

As climate change continues to transform these regions, countries risk losing their most important source of income. The transformation of coastal regions might discourage tourists from visiting these tourism dependent areas, given that these trips tend to be for leisure and that, for example, the disappearance of beaches might render a particular island less attractive to tourists, leading to a vicious cycle where regions that already struggle to gain access to the same economic and technological means as more developed countries to combat climate change find themselves in progressively more difficult situations.

RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

09/05/1992

UN framework convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): Declared a framework for cooperation in combat against climate change. It was signed by 154 countries and called for continuing scientific research and opening debates to negotiate policy in order to help ecosystems adapt to climate change. It urged member states not to endanger food production and to maintain economic development but in a sustainable manner.

- [UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE](#)

06/05/1994

Barbados programme of action BPOA or resolution 47/189: 14-point programme that identifies priority areas and specific actions necessary for addressing the special challenges faced by SIDS

- [BPOA \(1994\) - Barbados Programme of Action ∴ Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#)

08/07/2000

UN millennium declaration: Adopted goals for the future, particularly relevant is Chapter 4 (protection of our common environment) and Chapter 6 (Protecting the vulnerable)

- [A/RES/55/2: United Nations Millennium Declaration](#)

14/01/2005

Mauritius strategy of Implementation 2005 : Reestablished the principles established by BPOA and extended them to 19 points, recognizing the constraints suffered by SIDS.

- https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/65/2&Lang=E

04/09/2014

The SAMOA(SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action) pathway 2014-2024: This convention reaffirmed the special case faced by SIDS and established a pathway to protect these territories via partnerships and a holistic view on climate adaptation while at the same time committing leaders of SIDS to take bold action against climate change

- [SAMOA Pathway - outcome document ∴ Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#)
- [Mid-Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway High Level Political Declaration PREAMBLE](#) (Midterm review)

12/12/2015

The Paris accords: “The Paris Agreement is a **legally binding international treaty on climate change**”. It seeks to contain global warming to 1.5 degrees celsius and to make countries reach peak emissions as fast as possible. Its members had to submit NDCs(nationally determined contributions) by 2020 [see sources]

- [Paris Agreement text English](#)

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

1. International Support:

The priority when discussing the protection of these territories is providing international aid to countries in danger. This is both financial and technological as these countries require the use of innovative technologies as well as traditional protections to rising sea levels or storms: “adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, including through the provision of dedicated sources of financing, capacity building and the transfer of appropriate technologies to address climate change” (high level review of the implementation of the Mauritius strategy). One critical step is for industrialized countries to fulfill their commitment to provide \$100 billion a year to developing countries so they can adapt and move towards greener economies.

2. Transforming, innovating and improving the efficiency of coastal regions to avoid putting stress on their environments:

An important course of action for tourism dependent coastal regions (particularly SIDS) is to use the territory’s resources efficiently and to avoid putting stress on local environments that already suffer from climate change. Multiple NGOs collaborate with states to improve the efficiency of water and energy consumption as well as waste disposal. The NGO Eco Mantra is an example of an organization that works with companies and resorts in Bali to reduce electricity consumption and efficiently manage waste.

3. The potential of a blue economy:

It is estimated that the global ocean economy contributes between 3 trillion to 6 trillion dollars a year. In particular fisheries and aquaculture contribute \$US100 billion per year and about 260 million jobs to the global economy. Thus the UN has launched initiatives to explore the potential of a sustainable blue economy that might help develop otherwise isolated countries and territories that would rely exclusively on tourism. For this to be done, clear and consistent targets must be set, while recognizing the maritime economy’s relation to threats originating from land and agreeing to widespread sharing of knowledge and information to guarantee equal development.

4. A shift towards Tourism:

Tourism can also have very positive effects on our environment: a study concluded that the increase in Tourism activities in Nigeria were one of the reasons the country was able to make moves away from oil dependency. This can help stabilize countries’ economic activities and reduce the fossil fuel industry. Whether the overall impact of this shift will be positive remains to be debated, it is nonetheless an important factor to take into consideration.

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