

UNWTO Global Summit on Community-based Tourism

15-16 June 2022
Venue: Islands in the Maldives
(*CROSSROADS Maldives and Paradise Island Resort & Spa*)

20 May 2022

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Background

Tourism has become one of the most dynamic, resilient and fastest growing economic sectors, contributing to GDP, job creation and social and economic development along its value chain, and outpacing the world economy every year over the last decade. Tourism is also with no doubt one of the sectors hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis.

Tourism's value and growth potential positions the sector as a key driver of inclusion, local economic growth as it recovers from COVID-19 through entrepreneurship and employment creation in urban, coastal and rural communities.

Nonetheless, the benefits from tourism do not often trickle down to the community level or are not fully maximized to promote inclusion, combat depopulation and enhance regional cohesion. Further, tourism's role as a catalyst for inclusive community development is often undervalued in policy formulation and implementation as well as in destination management approaches.

Over the years, UNWTO along with its Member States have joined forces to place inclusive community development at the heart of tourism policies through education and training, investment, innovation and technology, which can transform the livelihoods of many millions, while also preserving environment and culture and driving a more inclusive and sustainable recovery of tourism.¹

Advancing this important agenda, UNWTO and the G20 Tourism Working Group under the leadership of the Saudi Presidency, developed in 2020 the AIUa Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism. The Framework provides guidance and inspiration to all governments, as well as all other key stakeholders in the tourism sector with the aim of fostering a truly holistic and integrated approach to inclusive community development through tourism.²

The 2022 UNWTO Global Summit on Community-based Tourism, jointly organized by UNWTO and the Ministry of Tourism of the Maldives, comes at a critical moment as the major source markets are starting to open up in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic and an increasing number of destinations are easing or lifting travel restrictions, which contributes to unleashing pent-up demand for international tourism.³

¹ 'Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development' on the occasion of World Tourism Day 2020, <https://www.unwto.org/recommendations-rural-development>

² <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284422135>

³ World Tourism Barometer | Volume 20 • Issue 2 • March 2022, <https://www.unwto.org/news/tourism-enjoys-strong-start-to-2022-while-facing-new-uncertainties>

It also comes as the sector emerges from one of its biggest crisis ever and faces the imperatives of accelerating transformation towards a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive model.

The Global Summit is part of a special celebration in the Maldives to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the birth of Maldivian tourism. In that half-century the Republic of Maldives has enjoyed many of the benefits of the tourism sector, including job creation, economic diversification and GDP growth. At the same time, the growth of tourism has exposed challenges in the fair and equitable distribution of benefits across host communities, including slow development of micro and small enterprises and economic leakages due to a heavy reliance on foreign inputs across the country's tourism value chain. 2022 marks a time for reflection to learn from good practice in inclusive community-based tourism, destination resilience, mainstreaming of inclusive policies and practices, and development of sustainable tourism business models.

In conjunction with the Global Summit on Community-based Tourism, the Golden Jubilee celebrations are complemented by the organization of the 34th Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia (34th CAP-CSA) and the Ministerial Roundtable on Tourism Resilience through Innovation and Digitalization in Asia and the Pacific.

2. Objectives

- Discuss the contribution of community-based tourism to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and its accompanying challenges and opportunities from the perspectives of the diverse actors across the tourism value chain.
- Provide a platform for international, national and local tourism practitioners and policymakers to exchange experiences and ideas on good practices and successful case studies on community-based tourism, in particular focusing on areas related to gastronomy, agriculture and community inclusion in tourism.
- Support locally-led projects that have direct benefits for the local community, as well as the tourism stakeholders and tourists.
- Address the importance of inclusive community-based tourism to stimulate tourism product diversification, the spread of benefits among all stakeholders in the destination, local empowerment and public/private/community using the case of the different islands of the Maldives as an example.

3. Overview

The Summit will be held for two days with three breakout thematic sessions. On 15 June 2022, all delegates will convene in a single venue to participate in a Global Summit/ Ministerial Debate on Community-based Tourism. Subsequently on 16 June 2022, three thematic sessions will take place simultaneously in two different locations in the Maldives covering gastronomy, agro and community-based tourism. A summary of the two days is provided below:

Day 1: Global Summit Ministerial Debate on Community-based Tourism (*Venue: CROSSROADS Maldives*).

Community-based tourism (CBT): Tourism development that places the community at the centre of tourism planning, development and management. CBT aims to improve the residents' quality of life by optimizing local economic benefits, protecting the natural and cultural environments and providing high quality visitor experiences.⁴

⁴ World Tourism Organization (2009), Tourism and Community Development – Asian Practices, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284411948>.

There are thus a myriad opportunities and challenges associated with CBT. Government at national and local level are central to supporting CBT and address the shortcomings. It is crucial to involve local residents, empower the local community, preserve and promote cultural tangible and intangible heritage, and maintain the overall sustainability of tourism resources. The key challenges that determine the success of CBT include as well conflict over land ownership and benefit leaking, financial issues, and community participation, empowerment and involvement in tourism planning and management as well as integration into the tourism value chain.

The Global Summit Ministerial Debate will explore key questions related to CBT, such as: how can a sense of ownership over tourism development in the community be assured; what benefits support CBT development in the community; how can communities preserve land tenure and avoid encroachment from outsiders; what capacities, structures, and systems are required for communities to prosper through CBT; how can the community's interest and values be protected; how can local participation be maximized; what solutions exist to mitigate the myriad challenges and ensure expanded economic benefit within the community; how can communities gain the necessary skills and access to markets.

Day 2: Thematic Sessions. (*Venues: CROSSROADS Maldives and Paradise Island Resort & Spa*)

Three thematic sessions will be organized in three different locations covering gastronomy, agro, and community-based tourism as described below:

Theme 1: Gastronomy Tourism (*Venue: CROSSROADS Maldives*)

The development of gastronomy tourism represents valuable opportunities to build inclusive economies as it can boost local businesses, social and economic integration, personal fulfillment, and social development, as echoed in the sixth UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism⁵.

Gastronomy tourism adds vitality to communities, and supports small, local food producers and strengthens their position in the market contributing to add value to the tourism experience while promoting the preservation and development of local produce, culinary traditions and know-how. With this background, the session will focus on gastronomy tourism as a driver of rural development, potential job creation, economic development and shared sustainable growth. The panel discussion will focus on good international practice in gastronomy tourism, drawing together policy makers and industry representatives from across Asia and the Pacific. This panel will hone in on the economic opportunities that can be enabled by gastronomy tourism approaches and products that leverage the unique local culture. In collaboration with the Chefs' Guild of Maldives, this interactive panel discussion will further focus on gastronomy tourism as part of tourism recovery strategies to support jobs and inclusive economies in view of its multipliers effects.

This session will be conducted with the following objectives;

- To provide an opportunity for experts of gastronomy tourism from across the globe to share ideas and best practices in using gastronomy as a branding tool for tourism.
- To highlight the potential for MSMEs and entrepreneurs opportunities, job creation, economic development and sustainable growth through gastronomy tourism.
- Share ideas, good practices and successful case studies on how to promote gastronomy tourism strategies and practices that ensure the sustainable use of resources, the valorisation of local products, market access and know-how and responsible consumption.

⁵ 6th UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism took place on 31 October - 2 November 2021 in Bruges, Belgium:
<https://www.unwto.org/6th-unwto-world-forum-on-gastronomy-tourism>

Theme 2: Agro-Tourism (*Venue: Paradise Island Resort & Spa*)

The Agro-Tourism session will address the opportunity to create a specific set of activities organized by farmers and coastal communities to cater for visitors in order to diversify a destination's tourism offer and deliver equal opportunity to local communities to engage in the tourism sector, particularly through agricultural/maritime inputs.

The session will be conducted with the following objectives;

- To provide an ideal platform for international and local experts from the agricultural (including also livestock, forestry and fisheries) and tourism field to exchange new ideas to enhance agro-tourism products and services.
- To address the economic opportunities and importance of agricultural development through the involvement of local communities, especially farming and coastal communities.
- Introduce Agrotourism products and services to expand the tourism value chain to isolated communities giving them equal chance to take part in the tourism economy.
- Identify good practice in sustainable management planning of coastal, marine and terrestrial protected areas using tourism as growth and conservation tool.

This session will be held in collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture of the Maldives.

Theme 3: Community-based tourism (*Venue: Paradise Island Resort & Spa*)

The Community-based tourism session will focus on inclusive community engagement in local tourism and how to improve livelihoods of local residents through sustainable tourism development.

The session will be conducted with the following objectives;

- Provide a platform for international, national and local tourism practitioners and policymakers to exchange experiences and ideas on good practices and successful case studies on community-based tourism, supporting locally-led projects that have direct benefits for the local community, the tourism stakeholders, as well as tourists.
- Address the importance of involvement of local residents in tourism at all stages of development and management of tourism and social and environmental safeguards to ensure fair distribution of benefits among the local residents.
- To provide an opportunity for tourism professionals from across the globe to share ideas and good practices on sustainability in pursuit of sustainable social, cultural, environmental and economic development in order to improve the living conditions of local people without damaging the environment.
- To provide examples of sustainable tourism strategies and approaches that engage a wide range of community members and consider challenges related to financing CBT and local capacity to deliver tourism products and services.
- To reflect on the road towards an holistic approach to tourism based on community development as a people centred approach

This session will be held in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage of the Maldives.

4. Target Audience

The Summit is geared towards ministers and officials from member countries, international organizations, industry experts and professionals from around the globe as well as the local associations from the tourism sector.