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New UN report encourages African countries to harness growing tourism sector

Spectacular Victoria Falls, seen from Livingstone, Zambia. Photo: UN Photo/Evan Schneider

5 July – African governments should make it easier and safer for Africans to travel within the continent, the United Nations said in a new report released today, noting that tourism demand there is increasingly driven by Africans themselves.

“Tourism is a dynamic sector with phenomenal potential in Africa. Properly managed it can contribute immensely to diversification and inclusion for vulnerable communities,” said Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The agency's “[Economic Development in Africa Report 2017](#) focuses on tourism for transformative and inclusive growth.

Chantal Line Carpentier, Chief of UNCTAD's New York office, said tourism export revenues tripled since 1998, from \$14 billion to nearly \$47 billion. Tourism now contributes to about 8.5 per cent of the continent's gross domestic product (GDP), compared with 6.8 per cent in 1998.

“African tourism is increasingly driven by Africans themselves due to a growing middle-income class,” Ms. Carpentier told a press conference at UN Headquarters, adding that four out of 10 international tourists in Africa are from the continent itself.

“By 2026, tourism's direct contribution to GDP is forecast to surpass \$121 billion,” she noted.

Highlighting some of the findings from the report, Ms. Carpentier said to realize the continent's economic growth, governments should take steps to liberalise air transport, promote the free movement of persons, ensure currency

convertibility and, crucially, recognise the value of African tourism and plan for it.

She noted the importance of easing red tape in travel between countries, such as limiting the number of visas needed when traveling on the continent, using the European Union's one visa as an example.

The UN official also noted the importance of keeping money in the continent – such as by sourcing food from local farmers, many of whom are living in poverty, instead of importing from overseas.

“This will require capacity building for producers to meet international standards and produce in time to meet demands,” Ms. Carpentier noted.

She added that the growing tourism sector offers opportunities for young people, who globally make up about half of the tourism labour force.

The sector is also heavily women-driven, with nearly one-third of jobs taken up by women, and nearly half in the hotel and restaurant sector.

Tourism and perceptions of peace

Another important theme highlighted in the report is the mutually beneficial relationship between peace – or its perceptions – and tourism.

It notes that the economic impacts of political stability can be quite significant and long-lasting. For example, following political instability in Tunisia, total tourism receipts in 2009–2011 declined by 27 per cent on average, from \$3.5 billion in 2009 to \$2.5 billion in 2011.

“Addressing safety and security concerns as well as swift responses to crises by African governments and regional institutions are paramount to the growth of tourism in Africa,” UNCTAD said.

“Promoting strategies aimed at improving Africa's image in the global media are also critical in ensuring the sector's recovery after conflict or political unrest.”

The mere appearance of instability in a region can deter tourists, leading to devastating, long-lasting economic consequences. However, the perception of danger does not always correspond with reality, according to the UN agency.

The 2014 Ebola outbreak in western Africa, despite being isolated to relatively few countries in that region, resulted in a loss across the entire continent.

Children in West and Central Africa moving in greater numbers than ever before, finds UN report



A boy walks on a sand bank surrounding a refugee camp in M'bera, Mauritania. Photo: UNICEF/Dragaj

5 July – With more than seven million children in West and Central Africa uprooted from their homes each year due to violence, poverty and climate change, and projections that this number will continue to rise, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has called for greater efforts to ensure that migrant and displaced children are protected from exploitation and abuse.

In its latest report, [In Search of Opportunities: Voices of children on the move in West and Central Africa](#), the UN agency noted that almost a third of that number remained in Sub-Saharan Africa and less than one in five headed to Europe.

“Children in West and Central Africa are [moving in greater numbers than ever before](#) [...], majority of them within Africa, not to Europe or elsewhere,” Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF's Regional Director for the region, said in a news release announcing the findings.

“We must broaden the discussion on migration to encompass the vulnerabilities of all children on the move and expand systems to protect them, in all their intended destinations.”

The report, based on a series of interviews with migrants and their families from several countries, has revealed a complex set of drivers for migration beyond poverty.

In addition to conflict, insecurity, poverty and lack of services, climate change is also forcing many in West and Central Africa to leave their homes.

Furthermore, with estimates that the region could see a three to four degree Celsius rise in temperature this century – more than one and a half times higher than anywhere else in the world – increased tensions and hostilities over access to resources could push even greater numbers of people to move elsewhere.

In the midst of such projections, the region's lack of sufficient protection systems – both within and across borders – to ensure the safety and wellbeing of refugee and migrant children is particularly concerning, said UNICEF in the news release, calling on policy makers to place children at the centre of any response to migration.

“This can be done by strengthening the chain of protection for children between countries of origin, transit and destination,” noted the UN agency.

“The close cooperation of governments, UN, and non-governmental partners is critical in to ensure children's access to healthcare, education and other essential services, regardless of their migration status,” it added.

UNICEF has also called on all governments, in the region, in Europe and elsewhere to adopt the six-point Agenda for Action for the protection of refugee and migrant children.

The Agenda for Action calls for greater protection of child refugees and migrants, particularly unaccompanied children, from exploitation and violence; ending detention of children seeking refugee status or migrating, by introducing a range of practical alternatives; keeping families together as the best way to protect children and give children legal status; keeping all refugee and migrant children learning and give them access to health and other quality services; acting on the underlying causes of large scale movements of refugees and migrants; and promoting measures to combat xenophobia, discrimination and marginalisation in countries of transit and destination.

Secretary-General outlines steps to strengthen UN's development framework



Secretary-General António Guterres presents to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) his report, "Repositioning the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda – Ensuring a Better Future for All". Photo: UN Photo/ Kim Haughton

5 July – Stating that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the “boldest agenda for humanity” and requires equally bold changes in the United Nations development system, Secretary-General António Guterres today outlined steps to better place the Organization to deliver tangible results in the lives of the people it serves.

“We need to change in order to secure the promise of sustainable development, human rights and peace for our grandchildren and we have no time to lose,” Mr. Guterres told the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

“The UN development system, therefore, must itself be far more integrated [and aligned] in our response [...] to work seamlessly across sectors and specializations – and to do so more effectively.”

Mr. Guterres noted that his report to the Council (on repositioning the UN development system) is an integral component of the broader reform agenda at the UN to better meet the world’s complex and interlinked challenges.

He added that his ideas and proposals are intended to spur further discussions in the Council and to solicit the views of Member States on a number of key areas. A more detailed report will be submitted in December.

Eight guiding ideas

Mr. Guterres highlighted eight key guiding areas for his proposed reforms. The first is accelerating the transition of the UN development system from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the 2030 Agenda and, at the same time, closing gaps and improving skillsets.

“We must be able to provide advice, pool expertise and help governments implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and help convene the partners they require to take actions to scale,” he said.

He also highlighted the need for a stronger focus on financing for development to help governments better leverage financing as well as working with a broad range of actors including the private sector, international financial institutions and other partners.

Another area of focus is enhancing the effectiveness of UN Country Teams – which comprise all UN agencies operating in a particular country – to build on the strengths of individual agencies while delivering with greater coherence, unity and accountability.

He also underlined the need to “delink” the functions of UN Resident Coordinators from UNDP Resident Representatives to enable more effective and integrated analysis and planning at the country level to encompass the dimensions of sustainable development.

Further, he noted that reform efforts would be taking place at the headquarters levels as well to ensure that no new bureaucracies or superstructures are created.

To that end, he announced that Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed has been tasked to oversee and provide strategic guidance to the UN Development Group and lead a Steering Committee to strengthen coherence between humanitarian action and development work.

Other areas of focus included strengthening a more cohesive UN policy voice at the regional level; strengthening accountability of the UN development system; and ensuring effective and efficient funding structures that would offer greater value-for-money and reporting on system-wide results.

Success will be seen through results on the ground

Noting that the success of the reforms would be seen in tangible results in the lives of the people served by the Organization, the Secretary-General said that many of the issues raised in the report would require further consideration and that he looked forward to working with the Member States on that matter.

“Repositioning the UN development system is our shared responsibility [...] I am convinced that, together, we can take the bold steps that the new agenda requires and that humanity deserves,” he stated.

Amid rising temperatures, UN agency launches video ‘forecasts’ on impact of climate change



5 July – In a year already marked by heatwaves and new daily temperature records, the United Nations weather agency and television weather anchors have joined forces to create video forecasts that explore how climate change would make future summers even hotter in major cities of the world.

The World Meteorological Organization ([WMO](#)) and Climate Central, a research and communications organization based in the United States, invited weather presenters from a dozen countries to work with meteorological services and other national experts to explore the implications.

A girl enjoying water fountains amid city summer heat. Photo: WMO “What the weather presenters have created are only possible scenarios, and not true forecasts. Nevertheless, they are based on the most up-to-date climate science, and they paint a compelling picture of how climate change may impact daily life in cities where most of the world’s population lives,” [said](#) WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas in a press release.

Cities featured in the “Summer in the City” videos include Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Frankfurt, Hanoi, Havana, Kampala, Madrid, Montreal, Nairobi, Paris, Sofia and Tokyo.

If greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase, the Earth’s average global surface temperature could rise more than 4 degrees Celsius or 7.2 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of this century, according to WMO.

TV weather presenters used two different climate change scenarios – high emissions and moderate emissions – and matched each selected city with a city that already experiences such temperatures.

For instance, in 2100, the citizens of Paris, where daily summer high temperatures now average 22.7 degrees Celsius, may see summer high temperatures hit 29.2 degrees Celsius as experienced today in Fez, Morocco.

Climate Central has posted an [interactive map](#) to visualize these match-ups.

Many of the assessed cities could see their maximum daily temperatures in summer rise by as much as 6 to 9 degrees Celsius.

“Urban warming could be double that of surrounding areas due to the presence of stone materials and paved roads. This would lead in particular to higher night-time temperatures,” said Mr. Taalas.

“The enhanced heat – and an expected increase in associated extreme weather like summer storms – will have major implications for energy and water supplies, public health and transportation. More intense heatwaves would also often lead to poorer air quality, which can even be lethal,” he added.

The videos are posted on the WMO YouTube channel.

In a similar exercise, WMO previously worked with some 60 weather presenters on “Weather Reports from the year 2050.”

Former UN envoy urges continued vigilance in fight against sexual exploitation and abuse



Diane Corner, pictured in 2014, while visiting the town of Kaga Bandoro together with the mission's Force Commander General Martin Tumenta and the Police Commissioner, Luis Carrilho. Photo: UN MINUSCA

5 July – While a number of steps have been taken to address the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), the former deputy head of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) has urged continued vigilance to ensure that the world body’s personnel do no harm while carrying out their duties.

“We can never take anything for granted. Every day, every step of the way, every time we set up a new mission, every time you deploy a new contingent, you’ve got to put in place the measures that are going to stamp out SEA. And we’ve got to keep doing it,” said Diane Corner.

Since 2014, Ms. Corner, a British national, served as the Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA).

The past few years have been particularly challenging for the CAR, a country of 4.5 million people that was plunged into civil conflict in 2013. According to the UN, more than half the population is in dire need of assistance. Despite significant progress and successful elections, CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest.

In addition, MINUSCA – which was deployed with the aim of protecting civilians, supporting the transition process and facilitating humanitarian assistance, among other tasks – has been dealing with numerous allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by its personnel.

“It was a huge shock to the Mission,” Ms. Corner recalled in an interview with UN News upon the completion of her assignment, adding that it “really turned us upside down” in the way it approached the problem.

“I insisted that we should be transparent. I insisted that we should try and adopt a victim-centred approach. I say try because, in a country like the Central African Republic, there’s not much by way of provision for anybody actually, anybody in need. So you have to do your best to use the services that were available and maximize that.”

In the wake of the allegations that arose in CAR, as well as in other missions, the UN took a number of measures to prevent such abuses; to respond quickly and effectively to allegations that come to light; to protect and support victims; and to demand zero impunity – recognizing that in the case of uniformed personnel, accountability is a shared responsibility requiring action by Member States.

Ms. Corner noted that what happened in CAR prompted the UN system as a whole to address the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse in “a completely different way” now.

“So if there’s any good that’s come out of this, it’s the fact that the chances of it happening again are reduced but I think we

need to be constantly vigilant,” she stressed. “We can never take anything for granted.

“Every day, every step of the way, every time we set up a new mission, every time you deploy a new contingent, you’ve got to put in place the measures that are going to stamp out SEA. And we’ve got to keep doing it.”

Ms. Corner also pointed out that it makes a “huge difference” having women in leadership positions in the UN. “Obviously, you see things differently,” she noted. “Not to say that there aren’t some men who’ve been fantastic champions of the fight against SEA, and we’ve had some of them in our mission as well.

“I think women have more of an understanding of what it means for the victims, and maybe have more of an insight as to how to have a more holistic response to ensure that we really are taking this seriously and that we’re doing everything that we can.”

She added that often the protagonists and the combatants are men, while women are the ones who suffer. “We’ve seen in CAR for example, that between communities, when there are problems, when there are tensions, it’s very often the women coming back together again who re-create the bonds between communities.

“And I think women take... a longer-term view because they think of the coming generation, of their children, and so they’ll really invest in trying to ensure that peace is restored, that they can look after their families,” she stated.

“I just think that they can be a very powerful force for good.”

Ms. Corner added that the importance of MINUSCA cannot be overstated. “In CAR, if MINUSCA wasn’t there, you would’ve had a genocide,” she stated.

“In my mind, there’s no doubt we’ve saved tens and tens of thousands of lives in CAR, no doubt at all.”

Half of all countries aware but lacking national plan on cybersecurity, UN agency reports



Photo: ITU

5 July – Only about half of all countries have a cybersecurity strategy or are in the process of developing one, the United Nations telecommunications agency today reported, urging more countries to consider national policies to protect against cybercrime.

Releasing its second [Global Cybersecurity Index \(GCI\)](#), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) said about 38 per cent of countries have a published cybersecurity strategy and an additional 12 per cent of governments are in the process of developing one.

The agency said more effort is needed in this critical area, particularly since it conveys that governments consider digital risks high priority.

“Cybersecurity is an ecosystem where laws, organizations, skills, cooperation and technical implementation need to be in harmony to be most effective,” stated the report, adding that cybersecurity is “becoming more and more relevant in the minds of countries’ decision makers.”

The top 10 most committed countries include three from Asia and the Pacific, two each from Europe and the Americas, and one from Africa, the Arab States, and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

They are, in order: Singapore, United States, Malaysia, Oman, Estonia, Mauritius, Australia, Georgia, France and Canada. Russia ranked 11th.

In addition to showing the overall cybersecurity commitment of ITU's 193 member States, the Index also shows the improvement and strengthening of the five pillars of the ITU Global Cybersecurity Agenda: legal, technical, organizational, capacity building and international cooperation.

The threat is particularly worrying as in 2016, according to ITU, nearly one per cent of all emails sent were essentially malicious attacks, the highest rate in recent years.

Last month, a cyberattack crippled tens of thousands of machines around the world. It is unclear who was behind the attack.

"While the impact generated by cyberattacks, such as those carried out as recently as 27 June 2017, may not be eliminated completely, prevention and mitigation measures to reduce the risks posed by cyber-related threats can and should always be put in place," said ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao.

The findings show that there is "space for further improvement in cooperation" at all levels, according to the report, which advocates for encouraging governments to consider national policies that take into account cybersecurity and encourage private citizens to make smart decisions online.

UN experts urge US state of Virginia to halt execution of man with mental disorder



Dainius Pūras, Special Rapporteur on the right to health, pictured during the 35th Session of the Human Rights Council in June 2017. Photo: UN Photo/ Jean-Marc Ferré

5 July – Two United Nations human rights experts have urged the US state of Virginia to cancel the planned execution on Thursday of a man with psychosocial disability.

"We urge the authorities to annul the death sentence against Mr. [William] Morva and to retry him in compliance with international standards related to due process and fair trial," said the UN Special Rapporteurs on summary executions, Agnes Callamard, and on right to health, Dainius Pūras, in a news release.

Their joint appeal to the Governor of Virginia was issued ahead of the planned execution of Mr. Morva by lethal injection.

The 35-year-old Hungarian-American was sentenced to death in 2008 for the murder of a hospital security guard and a Sheriff's deputy.

According to the news release, a court-appointed psychiatrist diagnosed Mr. Morva with delusional disorder in 2014, and noted that his crimes may have been committed as a result of the delusions he was experiencing. During his trial, the jury was not told about his psychosocial condition and he did not receive reasonable accommodation to adjust the process to his individual needs.

"The denial of reasonable accommodation in detention can be considered a form of discrimination against him because of his mental health condition," the experts said.

Mr. Morva's condition is such that he has ceased all communication with his legal team, gravely hampering their ability to defend him as his execution approaches.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.