

## **UNWTO'S EFFORTS IN PLASTIC POLLUTION**

### **1. *Relevant issues being considered in international forums and their possible impact on the plastic pollution negotiation process.***

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) addresses plastic pollution in the context of the [Global Tourism Plastics Initiative](#). The Initiative, launched in January 2020, is led by UNWTO and UNEP in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. It provides a global framework for action structured around a common vision and commitments to address the root causes of plastic pollution and drive the tourism sector towards a circular economy of plastics. The initiative is aligned with the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, providing its [sectoral interface](#) for tourism. The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative was endorsed by the UNWTO Executive Council in November 2020 ([UNWTO/CE/114/DEC](#)), which encouraged UNWTO Member States to take an active role in it. It is implemented within the framework of the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the [One Planet network](#) which is an implementation mechanism for SDG12 on sustainable consumption and production that also contributes to SDGs 13, 14 and 15 on climate action and the protection of marine and terrestrial resources.

### **2. *Information on upcoming relevant events, discussions, and processes.***

Tourism destinations (governments), businesses and associations can become [signatories of the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative](#). In 2021, the number of signatories increased by 250%, from 46 to 115, showing increased visibility and attractiveness of the initiative. The current members have a combined estimated annual revenue of over USD43 billion. The initiative works across the tourism value chain with relevant stakeholders including suppliers and waste management platforms, accommodation providers (large multinational companies and SMEs), tour operators, cruise lines, online booking platforms, as well as with tourism destinations. Signatories commit to (by 2025): eliminate problematic or unnecessary plastic packaging and items; take action to move from single-use to reuse models or reusable alternatives; (engage the value chain to) move towards 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable, or compostable; take action to increase the amount of recycled content across all plastic packaging and items used; collaborate and invest to increase the recycling and composting rates for plastics; and [report publicly](#) and annually on progress made towards these targets. To support the implementation of commitments, the initiative facilitates the access to [resources and tools](#) and [best practices](#).

### 3. Documents and information sources relating to plastic pollution

<https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/sustainable-tourism/global-tourism-plastics-initiative/tourisms-plastic-pollution-problem>

A large proportion of marine plastic litter has been found to come from tourism and other tourism related value chains in coastal areas. Recreational activities, building and construction as well as fishing and food production in coastal tourism destinations appear as the most probable sources. According to WWF's "Out of the Plastic Trap" report, in the Mediterranean region alone, tourism is responsible for up to 40 percent increase of the surge of marine litter that enters the Mediterranean Sea<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, plastic pollution can lead to considerable costs in the tourism sector. According to WWF's "Stop the flood of plastic" report, the tourism sector in the Mediterranean region loses up to 268 million Euros each year from plastic pollution<sup>2</sup>. Uncontrolled littering and, in general, poor destination management, are increasingly leading to the negative perception of consumers towards destinations. These can in turn trigger a decrease in tourism arrivals and have even led, on some occasions, to the complete closure of some destinations and operations of businesses with the consequent job and revenue losses in the tourism sector.

**Considering the fragmented nature of the tourism sector and its interrelation with many other sectorial value chains (e.g., food, building, construction, furniture, etc.), a systemic approach and global coordination efforts are required to tackle the plastics pollution challenge. At the same time, prioritizing the tourism sector when addressing plastic pollution, can lead to multiplier results across sub-sectors and at destination level.**

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<sup>1</sup> [http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/a4\\_plastics\\_med\\_web\\_08june\\_new.pdf](http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/a4_plastics_med_web_08june_new.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://mobil.wwf.de/fileadmin/fm-wwf/Publikationen-PDF/WWF-Report\\_Mediterranean\\_Stop\\_The\\_Flood\\_of\\_Plastic.pdf](https://mobil.wwf.de/fileadmin/fm-wwf/Publikationen-PDF/WWF-Report_Mediterranean_Stop_The_Flood_of_Plastic.pdf)