

Outcomes of the 2023 Pacific Sustainable Tourism Leadership Summit

Theme *Co-creating Resilient Destinations*

16 - 17 October 2023, Tahiti, French Polynesia

The 2023 Pacific Sustainable Tourism Leadership Summit brought together the influencers and change-makers who will set tourism on a sustainable and resilient pathway for the future of Pacific communities. Our dialogue has challenged our long-held assumptions and approaches to tourism and presented new opportunities for co-creating resilient destinations. These outcomes represent key areas that future collaboration and partnerships can advance.

OUTCOMES

- The Summit acknowledges the 14 Outcomes of the inaugural Pacific Youth Forum on Sustainable Tourism held earlier this year. It recognises the importance of encouraging meaningful involvement of youth and valuing their contribution in shaping tourism policies, marketing and destination development.

Economic empowerment of communities through inclusive tourism development

- The essence of our identity as Pacific People lies in our stories, forming the core of who we are. By actively sharing and promoting these narratives, we can influence the trajectory of tourism in our region.
- Pacific values must drive our approach to tourism going forward, together with quality data and research to guide our decision-making.
- Communities must be at the forefront of tourism planning. It is our duty to develop tourism with and for communities.
- Empowering Member Countries to address gender equality disparities in the tourism industry through strategic decision-making presents a valuable opportunity.
- Improved linkages between National Tourism Organisations and Ministries of Women Affairs with policy support and resources are needed to ensure the implementation of gender mainstreaming.
- The Gender Audit of the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) and selected National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) to consider policies, programs and the cultural context of sexual harassment in the tourism work place, the needs of marginalised and minority groups and data on roles of women in tourism in urban versus rural areas.

Culture and people-centered approaches to tourism development

- Culture is an enabler of sustainable tourism and we need to engage further in placing culture as the Pacific's competitive advantage in the global market, at the center of the tourism experience and defining culturally ethical tourism.

- Having 'Culture' recognised as a development priority at regional level means we can now mobilise resources.
- There is immense strength in sharing our vulnerabilities and lessons learned, not just the good stories.

Partnering for green investment for community prosperity through tourism

- The Marquesas Islands example highlighted the importance of working and engaging with communities at the early stages of the inscription process and investing in capacity building.
- Financial models that can sustain World Heritage Sites is critical at early stages. Utilising tourism-generated income to ensure fair compensation for all is essential.
- The Global Island Partnership Alliance emphasized the importance of collaboration and a collective commitment to sustainability as a central force in driving community and island resilience, economic and social prosperity.
- Tourism should benefit local communities, focusing on authenticity to nurture mutual understanding and restoration.
- Countries acknowledge that developing 'geoparks' is a crucial approach to sustainable tourism management, aligning with national development plans, implementing the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF), and fulfilling the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Commitment.
- Countries call on development partners and donors to support their efforts towards developing geoparks.
- The value of tapping into knowledge at regional, national, and global scales is vital. Outcomes need to be driven by community engagement, with backing from partners at regional and national levels. The potency lies in uniting these levels to achieve the intended results.

Climate financing for Tourism Resilience

- Coral Gardeners aim to involve the tourism industry in their coral regeneration efforts, which play a crucial role in our sustainability drive.
- We recognise the need for a new approach to deal with the complexities of tourism in the Pacific to achieve climate, social, and economic objectives. Overcoming compartmentalized thinking within the public sector is crucial.
- Establishing stronger connections encompassing agriculture, food security, renewable energy, transportation, waste management and marine protection is essential.

- It is essential to extend the focus beyond financial resources—it encompasses nurturing relationships and sharing knowledge at all levels.
- SPREP actively engages in regional cooperation to access climate finance, facilitating direct fund applications on behalf of its member countries. Assistance to access funds is critical and SPREP can provide guidance.
- The private sector called for simplified donor processes to access climate change funding. It is critical for partners to recognise the necessity to enhance NTOs, community and private sector capacity in navigating the complexities of funding application processes.
- Identifying the potential benefits of a regional approach to financing tourism adaptation and mitigation projects, offers opportunities for strengthening tourism sector resilience. Establishing events such as an annual partner forum can facilitate this collaboration.
- The PSTPF serves as a framework through which nations can seek climate financing and other region-based funding. It is essential to ensure that the private sector's needs are acknowledged and integrated.
- The Australian-funded Pacific Ocean Litter Project (POLP) implemented by SPREP highlighted the issue of single-use plastic litter in the coastal marine environments of Pacific island countries, and the importance of the tourism and food takeaway sectors.
- In alignment with the objectives of the POLP, the PSTPF and the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard (PSTS), SPREP will partner with SPTO to develop (in collaboration with Pacific island countries) the single-use plastic standards and certification programme for the tourism sector. Tourism stakeholders welcomed the POLP and expressed their interest in participating.

Partnering for Success - The discussions on future partnerships are duly acknowledged. These are the key messages:

- The job of doing tourism has become more complex. A period of transition lies ahead as Pacific destinations move from pre-Covid volume-based growth towards a more value-based and resilient tourism model
- SPTO should take a leading role in supporting the priorities and needs of the tourism sector. An annual donor coordination forum to be organised with SPTO leading and clearly communicating to donors sector needs and how the donor community can collaborate to enhance the well-being of Pacific peoples through tourism sector support.
- The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent is our overarching and long-term strategic policy framework for the Pacific. The Implementation Plan recognises the

need for improved collaboration and cross-sectoral linkages, policy integration and stronger support for mobilising partnerships and resources for sustainable tourism.

- We need transparency across all donor partners, technical support and recognise the role of SPTO as a conduit to achieve economic prosperity that ensures the benefits of tourism reach communities.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on identifying community champions who can spearhead tourism initiatives and equipping them with the resources necessary to promote sustainable tourism.
- We recognise the need for greater knowledge exchange, best practices, codes of conduct, training and tools to support community and industry.
- Laws, regulations and policies are required to protect the environment on which tourism depends.
- We need to rigorously advocate and call for urgent action by corporations and suppliers of plastics products to support collective efforts in combating plastic pollution.
- The launch of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard (PSTS) is a milestone achievement for the region. It signifies the Pacific's commitment to a better type of tourism.
- Countries, industry and tourism partners recognised the PSTS as a strategic instrument to facilitate the transition from policy to action.