

### ***Panel Session IX: Leveraging Sustainable Procurement to Transform the Tourism Sector***

**Short description:** Transforming the tourism value chains to low carbon and resource efficient operations requires an increase in sustainable consumption and production practices. Adopting sustainable procurement practices throughout the tourism value chains can further advance resource efficiency and generate innovative solutions to beat pollution.

#### **Overview:**

The tourism industry already accounts for 9% of global gross domestic product (GDP), and its importance is bound to increase even more. The United Nations World Tourism Organization projects international tourist arrivals to increase from 1.1 billion in 2014 to 1.8 billion in 2030. For many developing countries tourism is a key pillar of national development contributing to growth, employment, investment as well as technology dissemination. In many small island developing states (SIDS), it accounts for up to 25-60% of national GDP.

This scale of economic activity has major impacts on the global and local environment, such as through pollution and waste, depletion of natural resources like water, energy and land as well as increasing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In many cases unsustainable tourism can endanger the very basis of its own success: healthy ecosystems and habitats of flora and fauna.

Transforming the tourism value chains to low carbon and resource efficient operations requires an increase in sustainable consumption and production practices. By incorporating sustainability requirements into their purchasing processes, corporate and public buyers can convey a strong market signal and drive markets towards sustainability and help scale the market for these products and services. Setting up public-private partnerships in view of developing resorts, ports, airports, destination infrastructure and public transportation may offer the opportunity to engage suppliers to provide innovative and sustainable solutions, products and services. A wider adoption of sustainable procurement practices in the tourism industry can further advance resource efficiency and generate innovative solutions to beat pollution.

Sustainable procurement is now widely recognized as a strategic driver for innovation to respond to environmental, as well as socio-economic concerns of tourism actors. However, a number of remaining barriers impeded a wider uptake of sustainable procurement practices, including the lack of sustainable offer – in particular in developing countries and in SIDS, the perception that sustainable products and services are more expensive than conventional options and the lack of reliable certifications and consumer information tools.

Education and raising awareness among stakeholders on the potential impacts of sustainable procurement is critical to embark all relevant stakeholders. Knowledge sharing initiatives shall not only address governments, corporate buyers and suppliers but also the guests – in order to engage them in more sustainable behaviours. Engaging suppliers at an early stage, and other value chain actors is key to identify innovative solutions and business models and stimulate the market to offer more sustainable products and services.

**Possible outcome/impact:** The session will convene renowned tourism institutions, TUI, World Travel Tourism Council, amongst others, to explore how sustainable procurement can drive the change towards a more sustainable tourism industry. The UN Environment's compendium of good sustainable procurement practices in the tourism sector will be launched; it illustrates how tourism professionals have successfully embedded sustainability in their purchasing practices. These engagements at the Expo could ultimately kick-start avenues to empower tourism value chain business to join UNEA pledges to beat pollution.

\*Please note that these outcomes should contribute to Priority 2(l) of the Draft Ministerial Declaration.

**Moderator:** Ligia Noronha, UN Environment

**Panellists invited:**

1. Dr. Ulf Jaeckel, Head of Division "Sustainable Consumer Protection, Product-related Environmental Protection", Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU)
2. Mr. Alex Macatuno, Director for Policy of Department of Tourism of Philippines
3. French Government representative
4. Saint Lucia's government representative
5. Mrs. Jane Ashton, Sustainability Director TUI
6. Mrs. Carolyn Wincer, Director, Travelife
7. Mrs Madhu Rajesh, Director, International Tourism Partnership (ITP)