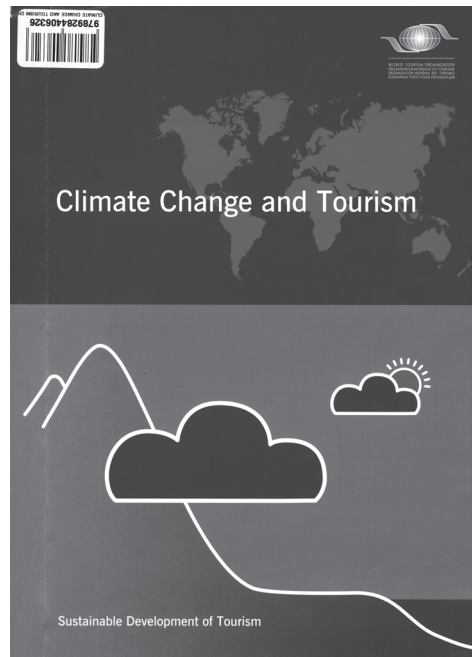


# book review

## WTO: Climate change and tourism

In the recent years, the topic of climate change has been on the agenda of many conferences and the media has been competing which of them will broadcast or write about the most sensational news in that regard. The impact of those changes, the pace of which is not only unpredictable but increasingly destructive, has been pointed out, causing natural disasters, often of catastrophic proportions around the world.



Increasingly often, one can encounter in the serious scientific literature an attempt at connecting the influence between tourism and climate, however, the first larger conference on the topic organised by the World Tourist Organisation (WTO, presently UNWTO) was held in April 2003 at Tunisia.

Special emphasis on the role and importance of climate factors as the key motive for tourist trends has been left out regularly because it is self-evident, but only until the moment when these factors exceed average limits and start acting adversely to the tourist market.

In the past few years, especially since 1997 and the enactment of the well-known Kyoto Protocol, the international community has been involved in issuing a number of conventions and declarations and in raising awareness of the general public about the problems of desertification, biodiversity, protection of rainforest and swamp areas and the like while the tragedies like a tsunami, hurricane, floods and draughts have resulted in many human victims.

The aforementioned international conference on the island of Djerba, although held four years ago and presented in the aforementioned WTO edition, has not lost any of its actuality due to the fact that the climate anomalies have continued and it is unlikely that they will normalise. The interdisciplinary topic of the conference, besides WTO, has brought together representatives of UNEP (UN Environmental Programme), WMO (World Meteorological Organisation), UNESCO and others that presented a number of expert papers and announcements.

The so-called Djerba Declaration was adopted as a summary of aforementioned papers and announcements, in the first place emphasising the complexity of the interaction between climate and tourism, and in the second proposing the tourist policy measures and environmental policy for alleviating the consequences of undesirable trends on both sides.

This statement, printed in the publication, is in fact a global framework for actions in the future which will undoubtedly bring new damaging impact of man on the entire eco-system, in other words on the climate. It also points out not only aggravated conditions for a tourist stay due to the climate factor impact (reduction of snow cover, especially at lower altitudes; raising of the sea level threatening many coastal and island destinations; unusual shifts of seasons etc.), but also frequent negative effects of tourism on the climate. Most of these effects are indirect, for example, due to the use of particular means of transportation (especially by road but also by air) contributing to the increase of the greenhouse gas volume thus causing the greenhouse effect with all the familiar consequences. Special emphasis was put on the fact that the tourists often use too much water (compared to the local population) and can contribute to gradual depletion of other natural resources including flora and fauna. The Final Declaration of the Conference appeals to and invites all competent persons from governments, non-governmental organisations, tourist economies, and regional and local factors to cooperate and act together internationally since this is a planetary issue affecting all and is especially acute in the northern hemisphere.

Furthermore, the edition contains a comprehensive expert analysis of relationship between tourism and climate change that, regardless of estimates from certain individuals, according to the intensity of changes so far calls for a serious and urgent action. The authors, aware of the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach and constant following of the new scientific developments, confronted certain climate and tourist indicators according to certain (macro) regions. They focused on coastal regions and small islands, mountain areas, and available water resources. On one hand they mentioned the elements of expected climate changes (less frequent

but more abundant precipitation, draught, floods, lower or higher temperatures, shortage of drinking water and the like), and on the other the consequences (implications) for tourist economy (shorter winter season, hot and draughty summers, bankruptcy of certain winter sports destinations, erosion of beaches and coral reefs etc.).

The tables presented in such a manner are indicative for certain destinations and can be used in planning of tourist activities and at the level of narrower destinations as an orientation for their management. Indeed, the more emphasised the economic and any other importance of tourism in particular area is, the more highlighted is the necessity of certain tourist policy instruments. That was pointed out by many conference participants mentioning concrete examples from their countries that are faced with already present and potential climate change risks, especially for hotel industry but also for accompanying services. It is obvious that the tourism marketing strategy must be adjusted to the new circumstances.

General conclusion of the presented material of that highly praised conference is commitment to sustainable tourism as the best protection and defence from undesirable climate changes. This WTO edition is, by all means, an interesting attempt at serious consideration of the issue, the more so if we bear in mind that this was the *first* such attempt on the global level.

The texts were published in English and French and additional CD-ROM contains papers from twenty-five active participants from many countries.

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*T. Hitrec*