

# **Utilizing Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria and Green Destinations Standards to Achieve Sustainable Development for Caribbean and Pacific Islands During COVID-19 Pandemic<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Introduction**

The paper discusses the role of sustainable tourism to revitalize economies and support capacity building for Caribbean and Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other islands and coasts in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

The pandemic poses an unprecedented health and economic crisis for small island and remote coastal economies. The number of deaths may be higher in SIDS countries compared to other developing country groups and regions, just as there are greater vulnerabilities in remote Arctic coastal communities.

The economic consequences of COVID-19 pandemic for small island economies is both devastating and far-reaching now and into the future. They include health effects, falling tourism revenues, remittances and capital flows, pressures of high and growing debt servicing costs, and high dependence on food imports<sup>2</sup>.

Caribbean and Pacific SIDS, islands and coasts considered in case studies include Barbados, Galapagos Islands, Guyana, Hawaiian Islands, Samoa, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, along with remote Arctic coasts and islands. Circum-Arctic islands, coasts and its communities and peoples have strong historic connections between this region and the SIDS.

The Arctic and SIDS communities and peoples share common characteristics of vulnerability and resilience for the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup> For example, international and national cruise ship travel and intra-Canada and international tourism has been cancelled or suspended in Pacific islands and coasts and islands in Arctic Canada.

The underlying research and paper focuses on practical case studies including an overview of countries' national reports on compliance to the UN SDGs, and a consideration of how a focus on how sustainable tourism may assist these islands and remote coasts, and all public and private stakeholders proceed with development and recovery.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a draft paper representing ongoing research and collaboration with different state and local partners. Further drafts will be provided before and after the conference.

<sup>2</sup> UN/DESA Policy Brief #64: The COVID-19 Pandemic puts Small Island Developing economies in dire straits. April 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Many Strong Voices, <http://manystrongvoices.org/>; Arctic Council, Coronavirus in the Arctic, see <https://arctic-council.org/en/news/coronavirus-in-the-arctic-it-is-imperative-to-keep-the-virus-out/>

Tourism is already changing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be changing further in the aftermath. There is a beginning of a broader consideration of how to make tourism more sustainable and resilience as an adaptation to the pandemic. There will be a consideration of the potential impact and benefits of sustainable tourism for these islands and coasts in these economic recovery efforts and achievement of the SDGs.

### **United Nation Focused Perspective on COVID-19 Pandemic and Achieving the UN SDGs**

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)<sup>4</sup> to the 2020 High-level Political Forum on sustainable development were undertaken by fortyseven countries; with most of those countries reporting on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It appears that small, vulnerable, conflict-affected highly-indebted, and tourism-dependent states are among the hardest hit.

These countries have described the impact in different ways:

- Many expressed their concern that the pandemic will adversely impact progress in implementation of SDGs and disrupt development efforts.
- Some emphasized the overall impact of the pandemic and how already existing structural obstacles will be further negatively aggravated.<sup>5</sup>
- Some countries described health measures undertaken to combat the pandemic such as strengthening public health systems, establishing quarantine centers, and building modular hospitals or new virology laboratories.<sup>6</sup>
- Many underlined the socio-economic impact of the pandemic and measures undertaken in this regard, such as assistance or stimulus packages, direct cash transfer to the most vulnerable, providing additional support to retirees, increasing unemployment benefits, reducing taxes for some economic sectors especially impacted by the pandemic, deferring payment of loans, and giving loans to small and medium enterprises.<sup>7</sup>
- Some described impacts on specific sectors such as tourism, agriculture, transportation<sup>8</sup>
- Some food-importing countries described the disruption of on food supply-chain and the negative impact on food security.<sup>9</sup>
- Others described the establishment of new mechanisms, such as national committees, to combat the pandemic.<sup>10</sup>
- A few countries raised the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic for their VNR related stakeholder engagement. The important role of technology for stakeholder engagement was also highlighted.<sup>11</sup>
- Some emphasized that the pandemic also provided an opportunity to rethink how governments and other stakeholders have been approaching such shocks and instigated reforms to strengthen economic, social and environmental resilience (i.e., Barbados).

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<sup>4</sup> 2020 HLPF VNRs can be accessed at the following link (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020#vnrs>)

<sup>5</sup> Armenia, Bangladesh, Estonia, Liberia.

<sup>6</sup> Armenia, India, Qatar

<sup>7</sup> Armenia, Argentina, India, Barbados, Bangladesh, Nigeria

<sup>8</sup> Gambia, Samoa, Barbados, Seychelles

<sup>9</sup> Libya, Seychelles

<sup>10</sup> Kenya

<sup>11</sup> Bulgaria, Malawi, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago

## **Linkages Between Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Development**

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Destination Criteria and Industry Criteria and GSTC-Recognized Standards including the Green Destinations Standards are referred to in these case studies and underlying analysis. There is a strong relationship between the UN GSTC Criteria, the Green Destinations Standard and the SDGs. Economic, environmental and societal dimensions are all addressed by the criteria and standards.<sup>12</sup>

By incorporating these criteria and standards, small islands and coasts can move towards meeting the UN SDGs. As the case studies illustrate, some of small islands and coasts such as Barbados, Guyana, the Islands of Hawaii, Samoa and the Seychelles are already firmly established on the path to sustainable tourism.

Therefore, the more general linkages between these sustainable tourism standards and movement towards achievement the UN SDGs for these islands is of key relevance, particularly since the sustainable tourism standards often embrace or parallel the SDGs.

The Inter-American Development Bank's report, *The Pandemic's Unprecedented shock to Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean* Henry Mooney, María Alejandra Zegarra, suggests the pandemic is likely to be an unprecedented shock, and that governments will have to look beyond traditional policy tools to safeguard their economies and citizens , and to ensure that the tourism sector will be in a position to resume their substantial contribution when COVID-19 dissipates.<sup>13</sup>

The following Tourism Shock Scenarios from the IADB report, *Weathering Coronavirus Storm in the Caribbean* illustrates the complex interplay between economic low to tourism caused by the pandemic:<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For linkages between UN GSTC criteria and recognized standards, see <https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/gstc-and-sdgs/https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/gstc-and-sdgs/>

<sup>13</sup> *Extreme Outlier: The Pandemic's Unprecedented shock to Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean* Henry Mooney, María Alejandra Zegarra; (IDB, June 2020) <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Extreme-Outlier-The-Pandemics-Unprecedented-Shock-to-Tourism-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> *Weathering Coronavirus Storm in the Caribbean: Terry-Ann Coley-Graham* (IADB Report 2020), <https://www.iadb.org/en/improvinglives/weathering-coronavirus-storm-caribbean>.

**Tourism Shock Scenarios: Impact of the COVID-19 Outbreak on GDP**  
(Percentage point loss of real GDP relative to pre-crisis baseline estimates for 2020)

	Shock Duration	Shock Magnitude (Percent loss of tourism activity)		
		25%	50%	75%
The Bahamas	April 1 to end-June	1.3	2.5	3.8
	April 1 to end-September	2.3	4.6	6.9
	April 1 to end-December	3.5	7.0	10.5
Barbados	April 1 to end-June	0.7	1.4	2.1
	April 1 to end-September	1.2	2.5	3.7
	April 1 to end-December	2.2	4.3	6.5
Guyana	April 1 to end-June	0.2	0.3	0.5
	April 1 to end-September	0.3	0.6	0.8
	April 1 to end-December	0.5	0.9	1.4
Jamaica	April 1 to end-June	0.6	1.2	1.8
	April 1 to end-September	1.1	2.2	3.3
	April 1 to end-December	1.8	3.6	5.4
Suriname	April 1 to end-June	0.1	0.1	0.2
	April 1 to end-September	0.1	0.3	0.4
	April 1 to end-December	0.2	0.4	0.6
Trinidad & Tobago	April 1 to end-June	0.2	0.3	0.5
	April 1 to end-September	0.3	0.6	0.9
	April 1 to end-December	0.5	1.0	1.5

Sources: Authors' calculations based on data from The Bahamas: Tourism Today Report; Barbados: Department of Statistics; Jamaica: Bank of Jamaica and Jamaica Tourist Board; and, the World Bank / World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

### Case Study: Barbados 2020 Voluntary National Review<sup>15</sup> and Sustainable Tourism

In 2018, the Government of Barbados announced and began implementation of the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) Plan to restore macroeconomic stability and place the economy on a path of strong, sustainable and inclusive growth, while safeguarding the financial and social sectors.

The BERT Plan outlines the policies that reflect the Government's alignment of its anti-poverty and sectoral strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the areas of fiscal policy to achieve greater equality; increased social protection access and social spending floors; improved financial innovation, regulation and inclusion and; climate-resilient, carbon neutral and marine conscious public and private investment for growth.

Progress reported by Barbados included increases in health, education and social protection investments that led to significant improvements in key social and economic indicators included in the SDG Framework. COVID-19 has resulted in the sharpest, deepest and most far reaching economic recession since the Great Depression, presenting, beyond the disease itself, a further threat to lives and livelihoods. Entire industries have halted activity, millions find themselves unemployed, and decades of global, human development progress are at immediate risk of being reversed.

<sup>15</sup> Government of Barbados Voluntary National Review (VNR) – Main Messages can be accessed at: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26138Barbados\\_Main\\_Messages\\_VNR.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26138Barbados_Main_Messages_VNR.pdf)

Small, vulnerable, highly-indebted, tourism-dependent states like Barbados are among the hardest hit. The tourism-dependent islands of the Caribbean see on average an over 45% contribution of their GDP from this sector, with comparable levels of employment. As of May 8, 2020, the National Insurance Scheme, the Government's national social security program, had received over 35,000 unemployment claims, representing a quarter of the workforce.

As COVID-19 has reset every development baseline, Barbados proposed to present the VNR 2020 in the context of the country's broad-based, COVID-19 response, which has not only seen a sharp scaling up of social protection investment and fiscal and financial inclusion policies, but also has implications for the achievement of other targets.

This VNR discussed the ways in which the BERT Plan and the COVID-19 response are likely to impact SDG achievement, as well as the opportunities they create to fast-track progress in the goals and targets outlined below. The Barbados VNR discussed the perennial challenge of country capacity to monitor achievement, as well as address Goal 17 on the global partnership for development, which has perhaps never been more relevant than it is today, as the world battles a global pandemic, with countries' having varying levels of access to the key resources needed in this fight.

Like much of the Caribbean, Barbados is highly dependent on tourism employment and revenues. Commercial flights to Barbados resumed July 12, 2020. Barbados is monitoring risk assessment and immigration policies according to the following categories; High Risk, Medium Risk, Low Risk and Countries with which they share a reciprocal "Bubble". Countries within the "Bubble": Include Saint Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, Grenada, Dominica and St. Vincent & The Grenadines.

Risk Categories of Selected Countries as at Aug 3, 2020. Determination of risk is achieved by using World Health Organization 7-day totals. The risk category of a traveller will be determined by the highest risk level associated with any country that they have travelled to or transited through within twentyone days prior to travel to Barbados. Additionally, the assessment takes into consideration other factors that may influence the accuracy of the risk classification such as the adequacy of testing in the source country.<sup>16</sup>

Persons travelling to Barbados are strongly advised to take a COVID-19 PCR test from an accredited or certified facility/laboratory within 72 hours prior to arrival. Persons travelling from countries within the "Bubble" (Saint Lucia, St Kitts & Nevis, Grenada, Dominica and St Vincent & the Grenadines) will not be required to present a COVID test.

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<sup>16</sup> High risk: Includes USA, Brazil, India, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Colombia, South Africa, Indonesia, Philippines and Russia

Medium risk: Includes Canada, UK, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Portugal, Sweden, Australia, Egypt, Ghana, China, Japan, Sri Lanka. Suriname, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Jamaica

Low risk: Includes Uruguay, Cuba, New Zealand, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Guyana and CARICOM States except those indicated in the Medium-Risk category and countries within the "Bubble"

<https://www.visitbarbados.org/covid-19-travel-guidelines-2020>

If don't have recent COVID-19 test, travellers from high risk countries or who have visited or transited through a high risk country in the past twentyone days will be tested at the airport free of charge. These travellers will be required to remain at the airport until the results are available.

Persons travelling from medium risk countries can be tested at the airport free of charge or at approved satellite sites/hotels for a fee of USD \$150 plus the cost of the hotel stay. Persons tested at the airport can either await their results at the airport or at a designated holding hotel or approved villa at their own expense. All persons must remain in their approved chosen accommodation until they receive their results. Test results would generally be available within twentyfour hours.

Persons travelling from low risk countries will be tested at the airport free of charge or at approved satellite sites/hotels for a fee of USD \$150 plus the cost of the hotel stay. Persons tested at the airport can either await their results at the airport or a designated holding hotel or approved villa at their own expense. All persons must remain in their chosen accommodation until they receive their results. Test results would generally be available within 24 hours.

Barbados has been considering and implementing sustainable tourism for a number of years.

### **Case Study: Samoa 2020 Voluntary National Review<sup>17</sup> and Sustainable Tourism**

Samoa's 2020 VNR assessed progress on all SDGs with a focus on People Goals. Overall, Samoa has shown resilience to multiple and frequent natural hazards and disasters and external shocks from the Global Economic Crisis, the 2009 Tsunami, 2012 Cyclone Evan and 2018 Cyclone Gita.

Despite steady economic growth with peak growth of 7.1% in 2015/2016 following the recovery from these disasters and external shocks; there was the increase in (basic needs) poverty from 18.8% in 2013 to 22.7% in 2018 and declining economic growth. There was also a rise in unemployment rates from 8.7% in 2012 to 14.5% in 2017.

Whilst resilience in terms of governance, coordinated response and recovery has strengthened, the recent tragic results of the Measles Epidemic in 2019 highlighted significant gaps in our health system; albeit the lessons learned have placed Samoa in a better state of preparedness towards national response to the COVID19 pandemic.

Steps taken to prevent the spread of measles and now COVID19 are impacting the economy with a decline in GDP per capita and expanding budget deficits due to decreasing visitor numbers and earnings from tourism for the first time since June 2018 quarter.

Investing in human capital has always been at the top of the national agenda. There are mixed results on the global maternal and child health targets but improved primary health care service access. High morbidity and mortality rates are reported. Despite this, there is good progress in addressing the risk factors of NCDs with alcohol and tobacco use declining and levels of

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<sup>17</sup> Samoa's 2020 VNR can be accessed at:  
[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26429Samoa\\_Samos2ndVNR2020reduced.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26429Samoa_Samos2ndVNR2020reduced.pdf)

physical exercise and healthy eating increasing over the past 10 years. The recent measles outbreak revealed gaps that are being addressed with a thorough review of the vaccinations and health information management systems

Responding to the school closures from the State of Emergencies from the Measles Epidemic and COVID-19 Pandemic, the Samoan education system has changed and is now delivering school lessons online and using e-learning materials.

There is near universal access to essential services such as safe drinking water, sanitation and electricity services. Efforts for digital transformation are resulting in increased access to mobile technology and internet and enabling such services as financial inclusion. The challenge is to maintain and improve the quality of water and sanitation, ensure affordable ICT and more clean energy consumption.

The reports on means of implementation have been positive, though despite progress in many areas, key gaps remain. With the current COVID19 situation, the sustainability of any gains is now in question.

Key take-aways include the importance of strong and decisive leadership, systems and capacities; constructive partnerships at all levels; use of country systems; effective management of significant amounts of national data and reports supported by data analysis capabilities

Challenges highlighted are the limited capacity including for implementation, data analysis and management at all levels; uncoordinated partner SDG support efforts; increased vulnerability to external shocks, disasters and emerging threats including health crises.

Along with nine other Pacific Islands (Palau, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Tonga), Samoa remains COVID19 free, but this has happened at great economic costs.<sup>18</sup>

Due to COVID 19, Samoa has a 5% forecast 2020 GDP reduction. Other Pacific Islands have similar or higher rates or forecast 2020 reductions: Vanuatu 9.8%, Palau 9.5%, Solomon Islands 6.0%, Marshall Islands 5.5 % (Asian Development Bank's Pacific Economic Monitor, July 30, 2020).<sup>19</sup>

Samoa has been considering and implementing sustainable tourism for a number of years.

Hawaii like Samoa is located in the southern Pacific Ocean, with many similarities of settlement, climate and historic populations. Within Hawaii, as much as possible given freedom of travel throughout the United States, there has been closure of the tourism and hospitality sector, and mandatory and enforced quarantines for all US visitors and returning resident, all of which is discussed below.

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<sup>18</sup> Ten countries kept out Covid. But did they win? (Owen Amos, BBC News, August 24, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53831063>.

<sup>19</sup> Quote and graphic found in Ten countries kept out Covid. But did they win? (Owen Amos, BBC News, August 24, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53831063>

## **Innovation and Sustainability in Islands of Hawaii During Covid-19**

### ***Pandemic Impacts and Responses***

Hawaii's status as a major travel destination has prompted local public health and tourism officials to ramp up efforts to mitigate the risk of the coronavirus spread (COVID-19). Hawaii's first case of the virus was confirmed on March 6, 2020, after a resident tested positive following a return to Oahu after a cruise from San Francisco to Mexico. As of August 19, 2020, Hawaii's current total covid-19 case count is at 5,349, with the highest daily spike in new cases hitting 354 on Aug. 13, 2020. The death toll is 41.

In Hawaii, tourism is 17 percent of the GDP, and supported 216,000 jobs across the state in 2019. Unemployment rates have gone from the lowest in the US to the highest, and exceed those during the Great Depression in 1930s. There is economic hardship, and many Hawaiians, particularly native islanders, are very vulnerable to COVID-19

In the early days of the pandemic, Hawaii was praised for its low covid-19 rate and quick containment strategies, with 900 cases occurring before June, 2020. Governor David Ige announced a mandatory 14-day quarantine for all incoming travelers, to take effect on March 26, 2020. David Ige signed a third supplementary proclamation, ordering the entire state to stay at home and work from home from Mar. 26, 2020 through June 30, 2020. Residents and visitors have been encouraged to follow CDC guidelines regarding hygiene, social distancing and avoiding large gatherings of more than 10 people in order to prevent the spread of the virus. All cruise passengers will be screened by means of temperature checks and interviewed by a physician before disembarking. Airports have increased their screening procedures.

Hawaii's quarantine order for trans-Pacific travelers currently applies to everyone who enters the state. Visitors and returning Hawaii residents are required to follow a mandatory 14-day stay-at-home quarantine upon arrival in the islands. Arriving mainland and international visitors must honor the quarantine until further notice. With confirmed cases of COVID-19 spiking throughout the state of Hawaii, the 14-day quarantine for inter-island travelers was re-imposed from August 11, 2020 to August 25, 2020. Beaches and parks are closed effective Saturday, August 8, 2020.<sup>20</sup>

An update on Hawaii's plan to allow incoming mainland and international travelers to bypass quarantine with an approved negative COVID-19 test result is expected soon. That plan was scheduled to go into effect on October 1, 2020 but changes have already occurred and more are possible. Those caught breaking quarantine can be fined up to \$5,000, or imprisoned for up to one year.

If they can produce a valid negative COVID-19 test result from within 72 hours of departure, arriving mainland and international travelers can bypass Hawaii's mandatory quarantine order beginning October 1, 2020. The 14-day quarantine remains in effect until at least September 30, 2020 for any arriving traveler who cannot produce a valid negative test result.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://hidot.hawaii.gov/coronavirus/>

## ***Innovation***

Hawaii's geographic remoteness in the Pacific Ocean from the continental United States provides some advantage for monitoring, and allows innovation. Those entering the state or traveling interisland are screened at the airport and their information is confirmed. Visitors and residents will receive calls from the State of Hawaii COVID-19 Quarantine Enforcement Task Force. Responses to these calls are either tracked until the end of the visitors or resident's quarantine period, elevated to law enforcement, or removed from the list (in the case of essential workers). As of Aug. 11, 2020, the state reported 27 arrests on Oahu, 22 in Maui County, 29 on the Big Island and 60 on Kauai. Many investigations are initiated by local citizens, some on social media, to root out quarantine violators. [Hawai'i Quarantine Kapu Breakers](#) write that their purpose is, "to bring awareness to issues surrounding tourists and locals not adhering to public safety standards during the pandemic."<sup>21</sup>

Technology is being used to enhance public health and safety, particularly after large scale tourism resumes. The Hawaii Safe Travels app will be used to track persons during their mandatory 14 day quarantine after October 1, 2020. The state Office of Enterprise Technology Services hired Google and SpringML to develop the app at an initial cost of \$638,000 to be paid for with federal coronavirus recovery funds, to be used as part of a transpacific pre-arrivals testing program.

The state is considering "enhanced movement quarantine" that each county can develop to give residents and visitors the ability to travel between islands without a 14-day quarantine. Officials had been reviewing an idea that would allow tourists to roam freely on resorts while their movements are tracked via a wearable monitor to ensure they stay inside the boundaries of the facilities. The "resort bubble" concept would keep the tourists within a "geofence" that tracks their movements. If counties opt to establish these programs, they can work with resorts or hotels for housing these travelers in question.

Travelers who enroll must stay in specific geographical areas and limit their contact with people not under self-quarantine restrictions. Travelers who participate must sign waivers saying they voluntarily chose to participate, as well as allow electronic monitoring and access to their health information. All are required to pay for associated costs. "At a certain point, we need to learn to co-exist with this virus and the EMQ or 'resort bubble' is just one step in the staged approach for a broader opening of travel," stated Kauai Mayor Derek Kawakami. Factors for the program were still being ironed out, like determining which resorts would want to follow all the safety and security measures, as well as testing of a geofencing electronic quarantine monitor.<sup>22</sup>

## ***Sustainability***

The Hawaii state government has the goal to increase the sustainability of the tourism industry by 2030 where the goal is measured by the tracking the number of eco-tourism certified business (47 by January 2020); and by 2020, to continue to develop policies and initiative that promote

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<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/KapuBreakers> and Quarantine and Travel: Strict Penalties, Rare Enforcement (Laura Sloss, August 21, 2020, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/21/travel/quarantine-enforcement.html>

<sup>22</sup> A way to travel in Hawaii? Government unveils 'resort bubble' concept to hop between islands, David Oliver, USA Today, August 21, 2020 <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/news/2020/08/21/hawaii-covid-19-resort-bubble-travelers-amid-larger-tourism-delay/3406323001/>

sustainable business practices that invest in the states natural and cultural resources, and support local job creation and thriving communities. A successful tourism industry in Hawaii depends on the health of natural and cultural resources, community, economy and relationship with the visitor. Hawaii is known globally for stunning natural beauty, unique culture, and the spirit of aloha. Integrating sustainable and responsible practices that increase environmental stewardship, perpetuate Native Hawaiian culture, and support community well-being is paramount to long-term economic prosperity.

The state government believes that Hawaii has the opportunity to become a global leader in sustainable tourism, and help demonstrate this importance balance to destinations internationally, but the shift will require: clear metrics; refined branding of Hawai‘i’s tourism economy; proof of value to the visitor; increased visitor and industry education; collaboration across the sectors; and integration with Hawai‘i’s *Aloha+ Challenge* statewide sustainability goals in the areas of clean energy, local food, waste reduction, natural resource management, smart sustainable communities, and green workforce and education (DBEDT Sustainable Tourism Study). The Sustainable Tourism target is intended to provide initial background information and to catalyze discussion and action around further developing metrics and policies to strengthen sustainability in the tourism industry.<sup>23</sup>

### **Case Study: Seychelles 2020 Voluntary National Review<sup>24</sup> and Sustainable Tourism**

Seychelles highlighted VNR the launching of its Vision 2033 and National Development Strategy (NDS) 2019 – 2023. that stipulate the medium to long-term pathway to sustainable development for the country based on the national priorities. It also allowed for the mapping of the SDG’s onto the six thematic pillars (Good Governance, People at the Centre of Development, Social Cohesion, Innovative Economy, Economic Transformation, Environment Sustainability and Resilience), each of which has anchored SDGs within its core content. The report addressed the impact of COVID-19 in a separate section that highlighted the social-economic-environmental dimensions of the pandemic.

Being a small island states and given its geographical location, the Seychelles are vulnerable to external factors. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the risk that a health outbreak can have on an economy that is highly dependent on tourism, and imports most of what the people consume.

Seychelles’ high dependence on tourism is reflected in the fact that the service industry accounted for 84 per cent of Seychelles’ GDP and 64 per cent of export revenues in 2018. Most of this is from travel, transport, and other ancillary tourism activities. The tourism industry in Seychelles has been expanding for decades.

In the face of the COVID-19 outbreak, official figures for tourist arrivals in March 2020 showed a sharp curtailment in the numbers of visitors, to less than half the total for February 2020, when arrivals reached over 38,000. Due to COVID-19, the Central Bank of Seychelles’’ (CBS’)

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<sup>23</sup> State of Hawaii website: Sustainable Tourism, <https://dashboard.hawaii.gov/stat/goals/5xhf-begg/nmui-ua2k/u3xb-rz9t>

<sup>24</sup> Seychelles VNR Review can be accessed at [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26383VNR\\_2020\\_Seychelles\\_Report.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26383VNR_2020_Seychelles_Report.pdf)

preliminary estimates show that year-on-year tourism earnings are to contract by 70 per cent in Euro terms in 2020 compared to 2019.

As a small island nation, Seychelles imports over 90 per cent of its commodities, thus implying that food products produced or manufactured locally do not account for much of its consumption. It is critical that the country guarantees its food security amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially with the tourism industry being affected, support the agriculture and fisheries sectors is a priority. As a result, a high-level committee for food security was established after COVID-19 pandemic. For the fisheries sector, an emergency plan was developed for three months to guarantee local fish supply and also protect the livelihoods of approximately 1,500 fishermen.

In April 2020, Government presented a revised budget for the year in light of the country's situation. Originally, the 2020 budget was based on the theme: "Equitable Results – Shared Prosperity". The budget was built around the National Long-term Vision, "Vision 2033" which aspires to "transform Seychelles as a resilient, responsible and prosperous nation that is healthy, educated, empowered, and that is living together in harmony with nature, and engaged with the wider world".

The revised budget, themed "New priorities in a new reality", reflects the country's way forward in this challenging period with spending priorities shifting towards:

- Health care – to contain and combat the disease;
- Food security – to ensure sustenance during the crisis;
- Wage retention and job security for Seychellois employees in the private sector;
- Social protection – to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable;
- Increased security – to prevent the proliferation of crime during the economic downturn;
- Investments in infrastructure – to support economic growth; and
- Investments in program and projects that will improve the lives of all citizens.

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Unprecedented COVID-19 circumstances are now forcing the Seychelles to demonstrate its resilience as a nation<sup>25</sup>. This requires an urgent review of national development priorities and renewed strategies for achieving international commitments such as the SDGs. Seychelles remains committed to its pathway towards sustainable development, even in the face of a serious challenge. While this new situation plunged the country into a period of uncertainty, it also compelled it to adjust to this new reality by taking national measures to prevent, mitigate and combat against the effects of COVID-19. In going forward, the priority remains the well-being of the people in line with the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – and achieving this in a balanced and integrated manner. Small, vulnerable, highly-indebted, tourism-dependent states are among the

hardest hit. The tourism-dependent islands of the Caribbean see on average an over 45% contribution of their GDP from this sector, with comparable levels of employment. In contrast, the Seychelles is even more dependent on tourism as the service industry accounted for 84 per cent of Seychelles' GDP and 64 per cent of export revenues in 2018.

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<sup>25</sup> Addressing the impact of COVID-19 (p 108-118)

The Seychelles has been considering and implementing sustainable tourism for a number of years. This includes participating in the Good Travel Guide<sup>26</sup>. Along with Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, the Seychelles have launched their Blue Economy Roadmap. The Seychelles are also active players in global climate efforts for SIDS.

### **Case Study: Trinidad and Tobago’s Voluntary National Review<sup>27</sup> and Sustainable Tourism**

Trinidad and Tobago is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) with a population of 1.4 million. In 2008, the twin island republic graduated to high-income status, due to its high GDP and rich energy resources. While faced with economic volatility as a result of fluctuating energy prices, Trinidad and Tobago’s economy remains resilient and the people committed to the achievement 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Trinidad and Tobago’s Voluntary National Review (VNR) underscores the government’s commitment to sustainable and inclusive development that leaves no one behind. The VNR process engaged stakeholders, assessed localisation of the SDGs and identified pathways for accelerating action toward sustainable development and implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Driven by a collective commitment to inclusivity, Trinidad and Tobago follows the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to SDG implementation. As such, nationwide consultations with multiple stakeholders were held. However, while the recent COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the postponement of some in-person consultations, the Government continued engagements through an online platform.

Highlights of the eight SDGs addressed in Trinidad and Tobago’s VNR<sup>28</sup> include:

- Significant enhancements have been made to infrastructure to support the universal healthcare system, with parallel improvements in the number of Physicians and Nurses.
- Citizens have access to free primary and secondary education. The system has been modernised through the introduction of a School and Learning Management System and School Based Management Standards to improve efficiency and service delivery.
- Women and children remain among the country’s most vulnerable groups. Major achievements include the Marriage Act, 2017 which abolished child marriages and the National Workplace Policy on Sexual Harassment.
- The government plays a significant role in promoting decent work through a number of strategic objectives including fostering decent working conditions, strengthening labour oversight bodies, the modernisation of labour legislation and the further development of policies and initiatives toward the realisation of the Decent Work Agenda.
- Support for the social sector and the protection of its most vulnerable citizens is achieved through the National Social Mitigation Plan, 2017-2022, and the development of a National Policy on Persons with Disabilities.

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<sup>26</sup> Seychelles, Good Travel Guide, <https://goodtravel.guide/seychelles/>

<sup>27</sup> Trinidad and Tobago 2020 VNR at [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26730VNR\\_2020\\_Trinidad\\_Report.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26730VNR_2020_Trinidad_Report.pdf) and <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=1692&menu=3170>

<sup>28</sup> Trinidad and Tobago 2020 VNR key messages, [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26732VNR\\_2020\\_Trinidad\\_Main\\_Message.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26732VNR_2020_Trinidad_Main_Message.pdf)

- The Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commitment aims to achieve a reduction in emissions from three sectors (electricity generation, industry and transportation) by 15% by 2030 from business as usual (BAU), and an unconditional reduction in public transportation emissions by 30% compared to 2013 by 2030.
- Continuous effort to devise and implement multidimensional solutions to the peace and security challenges by strengthening capacities towards achieving long-lasting peace and safety in society.
- Civil society organizations lead the way on partnerships through the CSOs for Good Governance Project, SDG Catalyst Network and SDG Knowledge Platform

The report also noted that Trinidad and Tobago, like the rest of the world, continues to face profound challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and implementing SDG 3 and health-related targets of Vision 2030. These include a growing demand for healthcare services as a result of a growing population and recent increase in immigration. The COVID-19 pandemic also tested the healthcare system's ability to scale up its service in response to emergencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic struck at a time when Trinidad and Tobago's economy was slowly overcoming the hurdles posed by sluggish global economic growth and low oil prices. The impact of the economic fallout is uncertain, given the country's dependency on oil- and gas-related industries for a large proportion of its GDP. Other challenges reported are financing for sustainable development. Trinidad and Tobago's reliance on fossil fuels as a substantial contributor to GDP delays economic diversification and de-carbonisation.

The vulnerability to climate change and external shocks as a Small Island Developing State, strains economic reserves which are often times redirected to recovery efforts. Opportunities for alternative green financing sources and the establishment of a sustainable development fund would be explored. Trinidad and Tobago have identified capacity gaps in the national statistical system that prohibits the collection and timely dissemination of data; even disaggregation remains a challenge. Initiatives across sectors for enhanced statistical capacity and adaptation of a system for monitoring and reporting on SDG indicators require improvement and further support.

Given its large hydrocarbon sector, the state of Trinidad and Tobago is not as dependent on tourism given its large hydrocarbon sector, and the revenues flowing from that sector. However, that sector has not been performing well lately, and lower global prices for hydrocarbons will continue to affect this country. Even though the priorities are protecting the population, mitigating the spreading of the virus, and avoiding pressuring health care systems, another important concern is the impact COVID-19 is having on the economy.

Even before the pandemic, Trinidad and Tobago were experiencing an economic downturn from the collapse of hydrocarbon prices. Coupled with COVID-19 travel restrictions, decreased flights and manufacturing reductions, there is still lower energy prices. Trinidad will be hit hard by this; for example, with estimated 50% cut in prices from January to March 2020. Reduction in global demand for methanol has impacted the Canadian methanol company Methanex, which idled one

of its two plants in Trinidad. This will further contribute to revenue reduction and affect other area of the country

For Trinidad and Tobago, relief and social benefits for the pandemic include upgrade financing to the hotel industry, stimulating replacements for lost jobs, pandemic leave, rental assistance for workers d, increases in food card allowances and family assistance grants, deferral of loan instalments by banks, reduction of credit card interest, reduction of interest rates on loans, deferrals on commercial loans, encouraging manufacturing and private sectors to preserve jobs, and the acceleration of government repayments owed to the private businesses.<sup>29</sup>

The government also indicated it will look at all sources of funding to ensure that it can support the economy, such as the government's Heritage and Stabilization Fund, commercial international institutions, and multilateral institutions such as the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank.<sup>30</sup>

The tourism sector is developed/under developed and has/does not have large sustainable tourism offer. For Trinidad and Tobago, relief and social benefits for tourism sector include upgrade financing to the hotel industry, stimulating replacements for lost jobs, pandemic leave, rental assistance for workers displaced because of COVID-19, increases in food card allowances and family assistance grants, deferral of loan instalments by banks, reduction of credit card interest, reduction of interest rates on loans, deferrals of payments on commercial loans, encouraging manufacturing and private sectors to preserve jobs, and the acceleration of government repayments owed to the private sector to increase liquidity

There is a fruitful comparison between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. Guyana has been one of the poorest countries in the Americas, but has recently been developing as a sustainable tourism destination. These efforts include marketing the Guyana as sustainable tourism destination through the Good Travel Guide<sup>31</sup> and through completion of aspects of the Green Destinations Awards. However, Guyana began efforts for sustainable tourism prior to the discovery and beginning of development of substantive offshore hydrocarbon reserves.

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<sup>29</sup> First Month of COVID-19 in Trinidad and Tobago, Solange Cross Mike (24 Apr 2020) <https://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/first-month-covid-trinidad-and-tobago#:~:text=Trinidad%20and%20Tobago%20will%20also,well%20as%20the%20cruise%20industry>.

<sup>30</sup> First Month of COVID-19 in Trinidad and Tobago, Solange Cross Mike (24 Apr 2020) <https://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/first-month-covid-trinidad-and-tobago#:~:text=Trinidad%20and%20Tobago%20will%20also,well%20as%20the%20cruise%20industry>.

<sup>31</sup> Guyana, Goo Travel Guide, <https://goodtravel.guide/guyana-ecotravel/>

## **Pandemic Case Study for Galapagos Islands Case Study and Remote Arctic Islands and Coasts**

### ***Ecuador Voluntary National Report***<sup>32</sup>

The Ecuadorian situation and levels of implementation of the SDGs have changed due to COVID 19 and the indirect effects of isolation. The challenges for Ecuador as a result of COVID 19 were accentuated by variations in the price of oil and the decline in foreign exchange revenues from the export of other products and services, which has greater impact with UD dollar based economy. This in turn affects the flexibility in the implementation of policies that reduce poverty, an objective of 2030 Agenda. According to ECLAC, poverty in the Latin American region and the Caribbean could increase by 3.5% and extreme poverty by 2.3% due to the pandemic.

While mobilizing resources to implement the SDGs has been a challenge, Ecuador has incorporated in its economic and financial policy the strengthening of public, aimed at being more efficient in public finances. Policies have been consolidated and non-reimbursable international cooperation strategies have been put in place to promote south-plan cooperation – south in particular.

For Ecuador, the 2030 Agenda is a continued opportunity to generate synergies between various actors for true sustainable development at the economic, social and environmental levels. It has issued two Executive Decrees and a Ministerial Agreement that allow the incorporation of the 2030 agenda in public policy and for the governance of this Instrument.

### ***Introduction to Galapagos Islands***<sup>33</sup>

The Galapagos Islands are a province within Ecuador. The Galapagos Islands consists of the Province of Galapagos and municipalities and islands within the province, including Santa Cruz, Isabela, San Cristobal and Floreana; the Galapagos National Park; and the Galapagos Marine Reserve.

As established in the "New Model of Ecotourism for Galapagos" adopted since 2011, the Galapagos Islands, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is one of the most important ecotourism destination in the Americas and globally, thanks to a model of sustainable tourism development, the guarantee of the conservation of the environment, the full satisfaction of the visitor and the good living of the community.

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<sup>32</sup>Ecuador VNR, see

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=2379&menu=3170> (Spanish),  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=2379&menu=3170> (English), and  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/992ecuador.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Information derived from Galapagos Islands Destination Sustainability Success Story, prepared for Top 100 Sustainable Tourism Destination 2020 (Muir, MAK, 2020).

The Galapagos Islands vision was adapted and reinforced in 2015 with the Galapagos' Plan for Sustainable Development and Land Use, which is the official planning norm of the province; and which states: "Galapagos is a territory of peace with inhabitants committed to the conservation of its natural heritage. Galapagos guarantees constitutional rights of its nature and good living for its citizens; Interculturality is favored and fair and equitable access to the use and exploitation of its natural resources is allowed, only under accordance and compliance with the biophysical limits of the archipelago, becoming a national and international reference in the management and governance of a model of sustainable territorial development".

Tourism in the Galapagos Islands is under the "Ecotourism Model" approach, this means that all tourism activities should ensure: maximization of local participation and equal distribution of benefits; conservation on natural resources; and shared responsibility between stakeholders. Galapagos Board (Pleno del Consejo de Gobierno de Galapagos) is the sustainability coordinator for the islands. The Galapagos Board is established under the Galapagos Special Law (LOREG).

The Galapagos Board is in charge of generating the Galapagos Sustainable Plan and the policies to accomplish it (Article 9, 10, 11, LOREG). In relation to tourism activities, the Galapagos Tourism Board (Comité Provincial de Turismo) is a multi-stakeholder board that works toward sustainability in tourism, as indicated in the Galapagos Special Law Norm (Reglamento de la ley). This norm establishes the creation of this board. Article 61 of LOREG establishes all tourism must be inside the concept of sustainability.

Since 2010, a new model of ecotourism has been established. This model has four components: a) The Tourism Observatory of Galapagos (TOG), b) strengthening governance, c) reengineering the destination, and d) market positioning. In addition, as a planning tool, the destination has a Sustainable Development Plan and Land Use Planning 2015- 2020 to ensure the conservation of the Archipelago. All Galapagos' tourism activities are under the SIMAVIS (Sistema de Manejo de Visitantes), which is strictly applied by the National Park and monitored by the Park and the Observatory of Tourism.<sup>34</sup>

The Galapagos Tourism Plan relies on funding from visitors' entrance fees, of which an estimated US\$ 14 million are collected each year. The mechanism is explained in Galapagos Special Law Chapter III. This mechanism enables financial viability and funding of the action plan. The Observatory of Tourism of Galapagos and the Galapagos National Park are in charge of monitoring tourism and sustainability in the Galapagos Islands.<sup>35</sup> Water and energy consumption, waste management and urban development indicators are kept at the municipal level, and each municipality has a sustainability plan.

To date, Galapagos has a specific legal framework for the islands where in the first articles it is established that sustainable development is the only framework for all types of activities in the islands. The "Galapagos Plan", which is the main planning document for the islands, is framed within the special law of the Galapagos, establishing sustainable development as a fundamental aspect of all activities. Over 97% of the Galapagos territory is under the National Park

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<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.galapagos.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/footprint2-SIMAVIS.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> See <http://observatoriogalapagos.gob.ec/> and <http://www.galapagos.gob.ec/estadistica-de-visitantes/>

Management Plan, which allocates sustainable development, as the only form of development in areas where public or other uses different to conservation are allowed.

At municipal level, each county has a sustainability department for planning and executing actions. At the provincial level, the Galapagos National Park is the Ecuadorian governmental institution responsible for the administration and management of the protected areas of Galapagos, and the Galapagos Government Council who is the Ecuadorian governmental institution responsible for planning and the administration of the province. The Galapagos National Park has a Public Use Department who is charged of the management of the tourism and the public use within the protected area. Both institutions are in charge of accomplishing the Galapagos Plan and the National Park Management Plan.

At least 30 members are involved within departments in charge of executing and monitoring the Galapagos Plan and National Park Management Plan. In addition, in accordance with the new ecotourism model established since 2010, the destination has the Tourism Observatory of Galapagos (TOG). The TOG is a technical tool designed to generate tourism information to be used in planning and managing tourism at both local and regional levels.

Some aspects of the Galapagos Islands approach to sustainable tourism are illustrative in the Good Travel Guide.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Galapagos Islands Pandemic Response***

In addition to the existing challenges such as remoteness and biodiversity conservation, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought additional challenges to the Galapagos Islands and Arctic islands and coasts. The pandemic response, the impact on tourism, and movement for greater sustainable tourism and sustainable development is all discussed here.

With regards to hospital capacity, the Galapagos Islands were underequipped to handle local and introduced cases of COVID-19. Hospitals were not as equipped since serious events and accidents and illnesses are rare, and there are only four ICU beds. (1 for 7500 people). To protect against the pandemic, access to the Galapagos Islands was shut down. The shutdown resulted in reduced shipping which caused interruptions in the supply chain, as well as to tourists intake.

The Chamber of Commerce says foreign tourists make up 95% of business on Isabel Island, the largest in the archipelago, and at least 26,000 of them visited last March 2019. Subsequently, approximately 33,000 people were left jobless, and some tourists left stranded in the Galapagos Islands. In a typical year, the Galapagos Islands result in approximately \$110 million US tourism revenue. In the first months of the pandemic, up to May 2020, at least \$50 million US in tourism revenue was lost. Total revenues for 2020 will be significantly lower than prior years, and there is no governmental support for that lost income for individuals or businesses.

To prevent Covid-19 infection, the Galapagos Islands were closed off from international travel by the national government of Ecuador per the following articles:

Article 1 - Foreign or nationals coming from any country will not be permitted entry to the

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<sup>36</sup> Galapagos Islands, Good Travel Guide, <https://goodtravel.guide/ecuador/galapagos-islands-green-holidays/>

Galapagos from March 15th 2020 at 00:00.

Article 2 - People who are in continental Ecuador and do not fall within the provisions of article 1 of this resolution, prior to traveling to Galapagos, will be evaluated by medical personnel from the Ministry of Public Health (MSP), in accordance with the protocol established for The effect.

As of July 1, 2020, the Galapagos Islands are open to international visitors. Current safety requirements include: presentation of a negative Covid-19 PCR test (valid for 96 hours), registration of the full itinerary for the islands with the Ministry of Tourism, and health and temperature checks at the airports. In the event that medical personnel detect that a person presents symptoms that meet the definition established by the World Health Organization (WHO) for “COVID-19”, they will inform the individual to the CGREG personnel and they will proceed to prohibit their entrance to the province.

During the lockdown, existing tourists have been allowed to stay and local tourism is permitted. Galapagos authorities have imposed travel restrictions that will apply to some travelers going to the Galapagos Islands from the Ecuadorian mainland. Internally with the Galapagos Islands and within communities during lockdown, there has been the development of local and subsistence agriculture and the emergence of the barter economy to address interruptions in food supply, lack of business and decreased economic.

Tourism operations, particularly hotels and marine based tourism are adhering to international tourism safety and hygiene standards. Hotels have adopted biosafety standards supported by biosafety protocols, supported by the Ministry of Tourism, national Emergency Operations Committee (EOC) , World Health Organization (WHO) and OSHA. The World Travel & Tourism Council (“WTTC”) has developed Safe Travel protocols for tour operators and cruise ship operations.

An example of hygiene and safety protocol for cruise ship is as follows:

- Every staff member and passenger will take a temperature reading before boarding the ship, each guest will require a prior test proving they are clear of COVID beforehand.
- For those unable to get the test at home, cruise owners and marina authorities will be able to give visitors a rapid COVID test, and following a clearing, guests will be able to board.
- For the duration of the cruise, staff members will be on the cruise or on excursions for the entirety. This means that passengers and staff enter COVID-free, and do not have the chance to get bring the virus aboard the ship at any point.
- During all cruise periods, guides and crew members will have PPE & gloves for boarding procedures.
- All clothing worn during travel to the Galapagos will be stored in a provided bag, and may not be worn until after the cruise. This procedure limits the spread of any contamination during travel.

Finally scientific and research institutions within the Galapagos Islands are using this period for increased research and monitoring.

Galapagos is one of the least infected provinces in Ecuador (70 cases with 1 death: as of 07/17/20). The keys to its success include:

- Remoteness: Galapagos Islands are remote compared to other provinces and populations are separated between islands, and closure of tourism and transport prevented further infections.
- Adaptation and resilience of local people, tourism businesses, governments, and stranded tourists.
- Application of international safe tourism standards to tourism operations, particularly marine based tourism and cruise ships, and hotels.
- Local scientific and research capacity including Charles Darwin Foundation.
- Resilience of wildlife and terrestrial and marine ecosystems, particularly given reduced tourist and tourism impacts.

The following lessons were learned in the Galapagos Islands:

- Health of islands' residents most important.
- Local self-sufficiency and adaptability of individuals, businesses, communities and islands.
- Tourism sector, particularly marine based tourism, pro-actively modifying its safety and hygiene practices to address COVID-19 challenges.
- Resilient and adaptable terrestrial and marine wildlife and ecosystems, and related scientific research.
- Good governance at local, island, provincial and national level, including gradual re-opening of islands, to national and international tourism.

With the Galapagos Islands beginning to reopen from months isolation as of July 2020, there is the opportunity to re-build how tourism and travel to the archipelago is carried out. Much as the islands are renowned for the study of evolution, the archipelago will undergo its own form of evolution to adapt to its new environment. The Galapagos Islands can act as a canvas for other remote island tourist destinations in the coming months, and will be able to learn from and become a model for other remote or island tourism destinations.

### ***Comparison between Galapagos Islands and Remote Arctic Coasts and Islands***

The Galapagos Islands and SIDS, and remote Arctic coasts and islands in Northwest, Nunavut and Yukon Territories share common approach to sustainable tourism and COVID-19.

The Mackenzie Delta Beaufort Seas region of the Northwest and Yukon Territories is home to the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in peoples, and peoples reside along and are largely dependent on the bounty of the Mackenzie River and Beaufort Sea. This region has been recognized in 2016 as a sustainable tourism destination.<sup>37</sup> Almost all communities in the Nunavut Territories are located on coasts and islands, reflecting the Inuit traditional dependence on the sea and marine mammals. Due to their remoteness, travellers to Nunavut access that territory most frequently by airplane and commercial cruise ships.

All the territories have restricted international travel and non-local tourism, and enforced borders to prevent travel by non-residents, and as precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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<sup>37</sup> 2016 Sustainable Destinations Top 100, <http://greendestinations.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2016-Sustainable-Destinations-Top100.pdf>

## Conclusions and Recommendations

These are preliminary conclusions and recommendations that will evolve as cooperation and research continue among these diverse islands and remote coasts in the Caribbean, Pacific and Arctic. At this time, the conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

COVID-19 is posing a significant health and socio-economic threats to small islands and remote coasts, and particularly to SIDS. That is due to their economic dependence on tourism, openness and linkages and dependence on few developed economies through that tourism.

It is expected that most of their economies will continue to severely contract during 2020, exacerbating their vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change. The dependence of many small islands and remote coasts on food imports adds the challenge of greater food insecurity during the ongoing pandemic, health and economic crisis.

The scaling up international development and national aids is critical for SIDS, small islands and remote coasts to ensure effective health response, securing food availability and avoiding economic collapse.

The impacts of the health and economic crisis on achieving the SDGs can only be known with a degree of certainty only in future months; however, current assessments are bleak at least in the short term.

As countries begin the pandemic recovery and re-opening process, integrated planning and policy coherence in the recovery actions can place countries on a trajectory to accomplish and build towards better achieving the SDGs.

Tourism will not in the near future rebound to previous levels, and will continue to entail disproportionate health and social risks to these small islands, remote coasts, peoples and economies.

Therefore, it will be important for these islands and coasts to develop more robust higher value tourism, thus mitigating the greater risk of lower value mass tourism, and overall encouraging more sustainable local economies.

Many of the islands and coasts considered here are already embracing sustainable tourism.

Sustainable destination tourism will be an important aspect of the revised tourism offer after the pandemic. Sustainable tourism will allow the island and coastal tourism destinations, in cooperation with local businesses and entrepreneurs, to more fully emphasize local cultures, utilize local foods and services, and provide higher value employments to local peoples as agriculturalists, artisans, artists, cultural interpreters, hospitality services, and tourism guides.

Local development may include greater renewable energy and energies efficiencies to reduce dependency on expensive imported hydrocarbons, local food self sufficiency to reduce dependencies on imported food, and blue economies based at least in part on sustainable use of coastal, fish and marine resources.