



**tourism**

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Department:

Tourism

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

# **Final National Tourism and Climate Change Response Programme and Action Plan**

**February 2012**

# Final National Tourism and Climate Change Action Plan

## Background

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According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), further defined climate change as a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

The main human influence on global climate is emissions of the key greenhouse gases (GHG) - carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane and nitrous oxide. Human activities, such as burning of fossil fuel and deforestation, produce greenhouse gases that trap heat in the earth's atmosphere. Most people worldwide are now convinced that the climate is changing, mainly as a result of human activities. There is an urgent need to address these changes by taking actions to:

- slow down the build-up of heat trapping greenhouse gases and remove them from the atmosphere (mitigation); and
- strengthen the natural and physical environments to ensure they can stand up to the effects of climate change (adaptation).

The National Climate Change Response Green Paper (2010), identified tourism as one of many sectors and areas vulnerable to climate change. The impact of climate change on infrastructure and the natural environment has the potential to affect the tourism industry. In some cases this could result in social and economic impacts in areas that highly depend on tourism as a source of income and employment.

Given the cross-cutting nature of climate change, the Green Paper on Climate Change Response necessitates the development of implementation plans by affected sectors. In December 2010, the National Department of Tourism (NDT) established the Tourism and Climate Change Task Team to develop the National Tourism and Climate Change Response Programme and Action Plan. The Task Team's Terms of Reference are attached (Attachment A).

Through the work of the Task Team it has become apparent that addressing the impacts of climate change on the tourism industry require long term policy responses as well as short to medium term actions to inform industry and implement some response measures. This Action Plan put more emphasis on the short to medium term actions. A summary table of Actions is attached (Attachment B).

## **Tourism and Climate Change**

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Tourism and travel is a vital contributor to the global economy and especially important for many developing countries. Tourism is an effective way of achieving cultural preservation and nature conservation. As a result, the sector is also contributing to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Climate change presents a serious threat to society, the economy and the environment and has been an issue of international concern for decades. As climate defines the length and quality of tourism seasons, affects tourism operations, and influences environmental conditions that both attract and deter visitors, the sector is considered to be highly climate sensitive. The effects of a changing climate will have considerable impacts on tourism and travel businesses. In some parts of the world, these impacts are increasingly becoming evident. The Caribbean, Small Island Developing States, Southeast Asia and Africa are the tourism regions thought to be most at risk. Climate change adaptation by the travel and tourism sector will ensure that individuals, communities and nations continue to receive the benefits of tourism.

Tourism and travel is also a vector of climate change, accounting for approximately five per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions. By 2035, under a “business as usual” scenario, carbon dioxide emissions from global tourism are projected to increase by 130 per cent (World Meteorology Organisation (WMO), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and UNWTO, 2008). Most of the increase is attributed to air travel but the sector has pledged to substantially reduce its emissions.

Addressing GHG emissions from the transportation sector is a critical aspect of national and international mitigation policy negotiations. Consequently, it is anticipated that climate change mitigation policy will have both short and long term implications for the costs of transportation that are fundamental to tourism (automobile, air travel, and cruise ships in particular). International aviation is critical to tourism with 52 per cent of travellers reaching their destination by air. As indicated, it is also the dominant contributor to GHG emissions from travel and tourism (40 per cent of the total industry’s carbon dioxide emissions).

## **UNWTO and Climate Change**

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UNWTO has been working to raise awareness on climate change issues in the tourism sector for many years and much has been done. In Tunisia, 2003, the first International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism was organised by UNWTO and several other United Nations agencies. The conference resulted in the Djerba Declaration on Climate Change and Tourism, which highlighted the obligation of the tourism industry to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and recognized the two way relationship between tourism and climate change.

A second International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism was held in Davos, Switzerland in 2007. The Davos Declaration (the full text of the declaration can be accessed at <http://www.unwto.org/pdf/pr071046.pdf>) included firm recommendations and a clear commitment for action to respond to the climate change challenge including the urgent adoption of a range of sustainable tourism policies.

The WMO, in collaboration with UNWTO, established an Expert Team on Climate and Tourism. Their role was to improve the application of information in the tourism sector. In 2007, UNWTO launched a Climate and Tourism Information Exchange Service to enable tourism stakeholder's access to research and data. The organization has developed and disseminated technical publications addressing climate change impacts and adaptation responses. The most important of these are "Climate Change and Tourism Responding to Global Challenges" in support of the Davos Declaration, and "Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Tourism Sector: Frameworks, Tools and Practices" in coordination with the University of Oxford, the WMO, and UNEP, and released in 2008.

## **Need for Tourism and Climate Change Action**

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Climate change matters to South Africa's tourism. Our geographic location away from most of our key markets, the heavy reliance we place on South's Africa environment in our positioning, and therefore in our visitors' expectations and experience, as well as the high proportion of fuel and energy costs in our product mix all mean that climate change is an issue of relevance for the sector.

From a global perspective, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation identifies four major categories of climate change impacts that will affect tourism destinations, their competitiveness and sustainability.

- Direct climate impacts which are very likely to drive changes in suitability of destinations for activities, seasonality and operating costs.
- Indirect environmental climate change impacts which includes changes in water availability, biodiversity loss, reduced landscape appeal, increased vector borne diseases and a range of other indirect impacts. The loss of biodiversity in natural attractions like the Kruger National Park may reduce its attractiveness to nature loving tourists. The spread of diseases such as malaria as a result of climate change may make some areas less attractive to tourists.
- Impacts of mitigation policies, both at national and international level, which seek to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and are likely to impact tourism flows through increases in transport and other costs. They may also foster environmental attitudes that lead tourists to change their travel patterns.

- Indirect social impacts. Climate change poses a potential risk to economic growth on a global scale, reducing discretionary wealth, a key driver of tourism growth.

These impacts will not be felt uniformly by, or even within, destination countries. There also remains significant uncertainty over timing and extent of impacts as consumer, government and industry responses as well as scientific knowledge are constantly developing and this is likely to continue to do so over the short, medium and long term.

This means that destination countries must identify the key climate change issues most relevant to them. Tourism needs to focus on:

- Potential changes in consumer preference away from long haul travel;
- Emerging policy and regulatory settings in South Africa's key markets that may affect demand for travel to South Africa;
- Emerging policy settings in South Africa that may alter the current trading environment;
- Emerging international agreements that may apply to international aviation and maritime emissions (collectively referred to as international bunker fuels) and climate change mitigation; and
- The need to better understand potential physical climate change impacts on tourism and identify adaptation measures.

South Africa is perceived by international visitors as being an environmentally friendly destination and the natural environment acts as the primary attraction for international visitors.

Climate change issues have raised the awareness of environmental sustainability for travel consumers in many markets. South African tourism must appropriately position itself for a world where environmental concerns are becoming more prominent. Climate change generates new challenges which include concerns about emissions generated getting here and home again.

Action by governments in our key markets also matters. Governments are looking at ways to reduce GHG emissions including emissions from travel. The resulting policies are likely to increase the price of travel and may also foster environmental attitudes that lead tourists to change their travel patterns.

Consistent messaging to consumers and policy makers based on solid facts and grounded in an understanding of consumer priorities from all players active in our offshore markets is an important element to reduce these risks.

This Response Programme aims to assist the tourism industry to build its resilience and capacity to adapt to climate change impacts and reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. The best approach that government and industry can take to address the challenge of climate change is to provide clear and consistent advice and information for action by tourism businesses.

## **A Tourism Response Programme for Climate Change**

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The impacts of climate change will be felt over decades, and even centuries. The Action Plan takes into consideration that tourism contributes to and is affected by climate change and advocates a balanced set of actions on mitigation and adaptation. However, the Action Plan contained in the response programme identifies actions to be delivered in the short to medium term. A phase approach to implementation will be taken. The actions have been clustered into three phases that are in line with the government's financial years i.e. 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 in order to ensure that the actions are reflected in the departmental annual performance plans.

### **Our 2015 Vision**

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The National Tourism and Climate Change Response Programme and Action Plan takes into account that tourism's response to climate change takes place in a context of many other initiatives being taken by government, business and civil society. It is aligned to other government measures aimed at addressing the challenge of climate change i.e. the New Growth Path. Our vision for 2015 is a 'Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Tourism Sector'.

The Response Programme and Action Plan are designed to deliver on the following Five (5) outcomes:

- A. Improved understanding of the vulnerabilities of tourism to the physical impacts of climate change in order to build resilience and adaptive capacity of the industry;
- B. Reduced Tourism related greenhouse gas emissions;
- C. A fully informed tourism industry through consistent and effective industry outreach and communications;
- D. A nationally consistent, inclusive and cooperative approach to implementation; and
- E. Maintain effective climate change messaging and positioning in our key markets.

The Action Plan recognises that climate change is a long term challenge, that implementation will occur in a dynamic climate change policy environment and that ongoing work and review will be required. The proposed actions are listed below as per the outcome they seek to influence:

## **1. Understanding vulnerability and building adaptive capacity**

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### *What has already been done?*

The NDT in partnership with the Department of Environment Affairs (DEA) and German Technical Co-operation (GIZ) has initiated a research project that will assess the baseline impacts of climate change on major tourism attractions and popular tourists' activities. Draft report on the research project has been prepared.

### **Recommended action(s)**

- 1.1 Assessment guideline developed for other vulnerable tourism attractions and activities as part of the baseline study.

**Resources:** NDT, DEA and GIZ  
**Timing:** 01/04/2012 - 31/05/2012 (Phase 1)

- 1.2 Facilitate the implementation of the Assessment Guidelines by major tourist attractions.

**Resources:** NDT and DEA  
**Timing:** 01/04/2012 - 31/03/2013 (Phase 1)

## **2. Reducing greenhouse gases from tourism activities**

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### *What has already been done?*

The NDT in partnership with Eskom conducted nine (9) provincial roadshows that aimed at raising industry awareness on saving energy and other natural resources.

The NDT has conducted a Desktop study that looks at the practicability of developing and implementing an offset programme for the tourism industry.

### **Recommended action(s)**

- 2.1 Develop a Voluntary Accord for the tourism sector to reduce its carbon footprint.

**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/04/2012 – 31/03/2013 (Phase 1)

- 2.2 Prepare report on potential GHG emissions management tools for the tourism sector.

**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/04/2012 – 31/03/2013 (Phase 1)

### **3. Communication and industry outreach**

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*What has already been done?*

The NDT held nine (9) Responsible Tourism provincial workshops in 2010. Climate change industry awareness was part of the workshops.

#### **Recommended action(s)**

3.1 Coordinate an outreach program of workshops for tourism business across the country to accelerate the communication of climate change issues to industry.

**Resources:** NDT, DEA, Department of Water Affairs (DWA), Provincial Departments and Authorities  
**Timing:** 01/04/2013 – 31/03/2014 (Phase 2)

3.2 Design a Visitor/Tourist Climate Change Awareness Flyer.

**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/04/2013 – 31/03/2014 (Phase 2)

3.4 Provide capacity building to key stakeholders.

**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/04/2013 – 31/03/2014 (Phase 2)

### **4. Designing a government implementation protocol**

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*What has already been done?*

The NDT B-BBEE Focal Point Forum has accepted Responsible Tourism as a standing item on its agenda. The initial meeting of the Task Team on Tourism and Climate Change was held in December 2010. A process to develop an Industry Protocol on Climate Change has been initiated.

#### **Recommended action(s)**

4.1 Establish Guidelines for the Development of Provincial or Local Tourism and Climate Action Plans.



**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/04/2014 – 31/03/2015 (Phase 3)

- 4.2 Review and report on the implementation of Tourism and Climate Change initiatives over the period of this Action Plan.

**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/09/2014 – 31/03/2015 (Phase 3)

- 4.3 Encourage provincial stakeholders to report on Climate Change initiatives at the BBEE Focal Points Forum.

**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/04/2014 – 31/03/2015 (Phase 3)

## **5. Maintain Effective Messaging and Positioning in our Key Markets**

*What has already been done?*

The South African Tourism (SAT) as an agency of government has the responsibility to market Destination South Africa in our key markets. The NDT is in the process of establishing an International Branch in order to facilitate the generation of knowledge about our key markets.

- 5.1 Establish and maintain tourism and climate change key message resources for tailoring and use in market by tourism businesses and government agencies.

**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/04/2013 – 31/07/2013 (Phase 2)

- 5.2 Monitor consumer perceptions and behaviour change related to environmental sustainability and climate change in our key markets.

**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/04/2013 – 31/03/2014 (Phase 2)

- 5.3 Monitor the international policy environment particularly with regard to efforts by governments to reduce travel demand and/or mitigate travel carbon emissions

**Resources:** NDT  
**Timing:** 01/04/2013 – 31/03/2014 (Phase 2)

## **Attachment A: Tourism and Climate Change Task Team Terms of Reference**

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### **1. BACKGROUND**

1.1 Climate change is one of the challenges facing the global tourism community.

1.2 From a global perspective, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation identifies four major categories of climate change impacts that will affect tourism destinations, their competitiveness and sustainability:

- Direct climate impacts which are very likely to drive changes in suitability of destinations for activities, seasonality and operating costs.
- Indirect environmental climate change impacts which includes changes in water availability, biodiversity loss, reduced landscape appeal, increased vector borne diseases and a range of other indirect impacts.
- Impacts of mitigation policies, both national and international, which seek to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and are likely to impact tourism flows through increases in transport and other costs. They may also foster environmental attitudes that lead tourists to change their travel patterns.
- Indirect social impacts. Climate change is thought to pose a risk to economic growth on a global scale, reducing discretionary wealth, a key driver of tourism growth.

1.3 The South African government has prioritized climate change action, the following major initiatives and actions have been taken:

- Cabinet approved the Long Term Mitigation Scenarios in 2008;
- A Climate Change Policy Summit was held in March 2009; and
- A White Paper on National Climate Change Response (2011) has been developed.

1.4 Tourism has been identified as a response sector on the draft green paper because it contribute to the emission of greenhouse gases and is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

- 1.5 The tourism sector should define and develop least cost mitigation of greenhouse gases emitted by tourists' transportation, accommodation and activities. In addition, the sector needs to plan its adaptation to climate change impacts such as frequent extreme weather events and sea level rise.
- 1.6 The Tourism Branch within the then Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism drafted a position paper on climate change.
- 1.7 The Acting Director-General of the newly established National Department of Tourism approved the establishment of a Task Team to develop a National Action Plan on Climate Change and Tourism.
- 1.8 Currently the NDT does not have a comprehensive plan to address the challenges associated with climate change.
- 1.9 The objective is to ultimately have a plan of action that identifies and prioritizes the critical areas of work on tourism and climate change.

## **2. MEMBERSHIP**

- 2.1 Membership of the Task Team will comprise of the following:
  - NDT: Responsible Tourism and Research Unit;
  - Department of Environmental Affairs;
  - Provincial Departments of Tourism and/or Marketing Authorities;
  - SALGA and Local Government Tourism Officials;
  - South African Tourism;
  - Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA);
  - Academic and Research Institutions (advisory capacity).

### **3. PROCESS**

3.1 The Task Team will undertake the following steps to develop the Tourism Action Plan on Climate Change:

- Review currently available national and international research, identify additional research needs and available funding resources for that research;
- Seek an industry perspective on the direct and indirect impacts of climate change on tourism;
- Undertake a review of current programs and initiatives on climate change and tourism; and
- Recommend practical actions that industry and government can take forward to increase the industry's resilience to climate change.

### **4. SCOPE**

4.1 The Task Team's priority areas (indicative) for action include;

- Conducting research to assess consumer attitudes towards climate change issues, and any changes to traveler behavior;
- Quantifying the tourism industry's carbon footprint and the economic impact of climate change including mitigation measures;
- Examination of localized climate change impacts on popular tourism regions/attractions;
- Identification of strategies to increase the industry's resilience and ability to adapt to physical climate change impacts;
- Assess the effectiveness, credibility and applicability of carbon offset schemes as measures to reduce tourism's carbon footprint; and
- Develop a communication strategy that target industry and the consumers.

### **5. OUTCOME**

5.1 The outcome of the Tourism and Climate Change Task Team work will be the National Action Plan on Tourism and Climate Change.

## **6. AUTHORITY**

- 6.1 The Tourism and Climate Change Task Team will report to the B-BBEE Focal Points Forum.
- 6.2 Tourism Development Working Group.
- 6.3 MIPTECH

## Attachment B: Summary of Actions

Proposed Tourism and Climate Change Actions 2012/13 – 2014/15		
Action	Resources	Phase (P)
1. Assessment guideline developed for other vulnerable tourism attractions and activities as part of the baseline study	NDT	P1
2. Facilitate the implementation of the Assessment Guidelines by major tourist attractions.	NDT	P1
3. Develop a Voluntary Accord for the tourism sector to reduce its carbon footprint.	NDT and industry stakeholders	P1
4. Prepare report on potential GHG emissions management tools for the tourism sector.	NDT	P1
5. Coordinate an outreach program of workshops for tourism business across the country to accelerate the communication of climate change issues to industry.	NDT,DEA, DWA, Provincial Departments, and Authorities	P2
6. Design a Visitor/Tourist Climate Change Awareness Flyer	NDT	P2
7. Provide capacity building to key stakeholders.	NDT, Responsible Agencies	P2
8. Establish and maintain tourism and climate change key message resources for tailoring and use in market by tourism businesses and government agencies.	NDT	P2
9. Monitor consumer perceptions and behaviour change related to environmental sustainability and climate change in our key markets.	NDT	P2
10. Monitor the international policy environment particularly with regard to efforts by governments to reduce travel demand and/or mitigate travel carbon emissions.	NDT	P2
11. Establish Guidelines for the Development of Provincial or Local Tourism and Climate Action Plans.	NDT	P3
12. Review and report on the implementation of Tourism and Climate Change initiatives over the period of this Action Plan.	NDT	P3
13. Encourage provincial stakeholders to report on Tourism and Climate Change initiatives at the BBEE Focal Points Forum.	NDT	P3

\*Final Draft\*