



SDG, NDCs, and ORF – The Similarity and connectivity with sustainable tourism reach in the tourism sector



Introduction

Tourism, as a dynamic and cross-cutting sector, plays a pivotal role in contributing to sustainable development, climate action, and institutional performance. To align with global, national, and organizational goals, the tourism sector must integrate and respond to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, and internal Organization Results Frameworks (ORFs). These frameworks, though distinct in origin, share a common vision: fostering inclusive, resilient, and sustainable societies. Understanding the connectivity and similarity between these mechanisms enables more coherent planning, reporting, and monitoring of sustainable tourism initiatives.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Tourism

The **SDGs**, adopted in 2015 by the United Nations, provide a universal blueprint for peace, prosperity, and sustainability by 2030. Tourism directly contributes to several goals:

- **SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth): Through job creation and economic inclusion.
- **SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production): By promoting sustainable tourism practices.
- **SDG 13** (Climate Action): Through mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- **SDG 14 & 15**: Through the conservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Tourism also indirectly supports goals related to gender equality, infrastructure, innovation, and partnerships.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

NDCs are national climate action plans submitted by countries under the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to climate change. Tourism contributes to NDCs in multiple ways:

- Reducing the carbon footprint of travel and hospitality sectors.
- Promoting low-carbon transport, green building standards, and renewable energy in tourism operations.
- Enhancing community and ecosystem resilience through sustainable tourism models and climate-smart practices.

As a high-emission sector with significant environmental impact, tourism has a responsibility to align with NDC targets, especially in climate-vulnerable countries like Sri Lanka.



Organization Results Framework (ORF)

The **ORF** is an internal performance management tool used by national or organizational entities, such as the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), to measure progress against strategic goals. In sustainable tourism, ORF typically includes:

- Policy development and implementation.
- Stakeholder engagement and capacity building.
- Monitoring of certified destinations and enterprises (e.g., NSTC, Green Destinations).
- Institutional coordination, data sharing, and reporting.

ORF ensures alignment with both national policies and international commitments (e.g., SDGs and NDCs) through measurable outputs, outcomes, and indicators.

Similarities and Connectivity of SDG, NDC, and ORF in Sustainable Tourism

These three frameworks are complementary—SDGs provide the vision, NDCs outline climate targets, and the ORF serves as a tool to measure and report outcomes. Together, they form a unified structure guiding the tourism sector toward sustainability, climate resilience, and socio-economic empowerment.

Despite their unique purposes, the SDG, NDC, and ORF frameworks share several commonalities in sustainable tourism:

- **Shared Goals:** All three prioritize **resilience, resource efficiency, inclusive growth, and climate action.**
- **Integrated Planning:** They require inter-sectoral collaboration involving tourism, environment, energy, infrastructure, and community sectors.
- **Indicator-Based Monitoring:** SDG indicators (e.g., 12.b.1), NDC targets (e.g., carbon reduction per sector), and ORF KPIs (e.g., number of certified enterprises) provide structured ways to track progress.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** All emphasize active participation of government, private sector, local communities, and civil society.
- **Transparency and Reporting:** Each framework demands systematic data gathering, validation, and public reporting, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.



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Similarity and Connectivity among SDGs, NDCs, and ORF

Framework	Focus Area	Relevance to Sustainable Tourism
SDGs (UN Agenda 2030)	A global set of 17 goals aimed at eradicating poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity	Tourism contributes directly to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action), among others
NDCs (Paris Agreement)	National climate change commitments to reduce GHG emissions and adapt to climate impacts	Sustainable tourism helps meet NDC targets by reducing carbon footprints, promoting green buildings, community-based conservation, and climate-resilient infrastructure
ORF (Organizational Results Framework)	Monitoring tool used by institutions and development partners to track project outcomes and impact	Ensures that sustainable tourism projects are results-oriented, aligned with national priorities, and contributing to systemic transformation

Monitoring, Data Gathering, and Role of National Tourism Organizations

Monitoring and data collection are vital for effective implementation of these frameworks:

- National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) like SLTDA must lead baseline assessments, indicator tracking, and report submissions.
- Tools such as the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC) provide data for both SDG and NDC reporting.
- Collaboration with environmental agencies, statistical departments, and academic institutions enhances data accuracy and policy relevance.

Expected roles of tourism institutions include:

- Mainstreaming SDG and NDC indicators in tourism planning.
- Promoting green investments and carbon offsetting programs.
- Facilitating training and awareness for stakeholders.
- Serving as a national reporting hub, connecting tourism performance with global and national climate and development goals.



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Expectations from Sustainable Tourism Initiatives

- Promote inclusive and green economic growth
- Reduce carbon emissions from tourism activities and infrastructure
- Increase community benefits and support rural development
- Improve environmental management, climate adaptation, and biodiversity conservation
- Establish monitoring and reporting systems aligned with SDGs, NDCs, and institutional goals

Summary:

A coordinated approach that aligns SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions), and ORFs (Organization Results Framework) within tourism ensures not only environmental and social sustainability but also institutional excellence. National tourism authorities must embrace their strategic role in this integration, ensuring that tourism becomes a true enabler of sustainable and climate-resilient development.