

Policy on Actions for Contributing to the SDGs and Promoting Sustainable Tourism

June 2021

Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)

1. Introduction

Have you ever imagined what Japan will be like in 20 years?

Progress in aging coupled with plummeting birthrate drives a sharp decline in working-age population in society.

In rural areas, depopulation is taking place at an even faster pace, and the local community is losing its sustainability.

Ongoing global warming keeps changing ecosystems, which is combined with frequent catastrophes and epidemics.

The Japanese nature, culture, and way of life that we have protected for a long time are now in danger.

Although they are different in sort and degree, countries all over the world are also struggling with serious issues. This is where the United Nations (UN) has sounded the alarm.

At the UN Summit in September 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the international goals covering the period from 2016 to 2030, as the successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) formulated in 2001.

The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets to achieve a sustainable world, pledging that “No one will be left behind” on Earth and representing the universal goals that the whole international community should tackle together.

As a member of international community who seeks sustainable development, Japanese government and the Japan Business Federation, together with many private companies, are also striving to achieve these goals.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



2 . Striving for sustainability in the tourism sector —Sustainable Tourism—

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the number of international travelers in the world has been on the increase since 2010, reaching 1.46 billion in 2019 before the outbreak of COVID-19. Such an increase in the number of travelers has proved to contribute to the socio-economic revitalization and job creation in regional communities, whereas it reveals some negative aspects of tourism as well, such as a heavy burden to the natural environment and the lives of the people living in areas having an excessive concentration of tourists.

To address these challenges, UNWTO has long been advocating the promotion of sustainable tourism. UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities,” and communicates its importance to parties involved in tourism across the world through various activities.

While only three of the SDGs, Goal 8 for economic growth and employment, Goal 12 for consumption and production, and Goal 14 for marine resources, articulate the role of tourism in their targets, UNWTO has declared that tourism has a power to contribute directly or indirectly to all the 17 goals and plays an important role in achieving them. Following the declaration, UNWTO has strengthened its efforts by designating the year 2017 as the “International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.”

In addition, at the G20 Tourism Ministers’ Meeting held in Kutchan-cho, Hokkaido in October 2019, it was confirmed that tourism contributes to both “driving economic growth” and “contribution to the SDGs.”

(Reference) UNWTO: Sustainable Development

<https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

(Reference) UNWTO: 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

<https://www.unwto.org/tourism4development2017>

Since the beginning of 2020, COVID-19 has spread all over the world, having a tremendous impact on the tourism industry. The number of international travelers has plummeted in 2020, and according to UNWTO and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), it is expected that travel demand would not recover to the 2019 levels until 2024 or later.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, people’s attitudes toward travel are changing. Various surveys have revealed that travelers want their destinations to ensure the provision of anti-COVID-19 measures and emergency systems for accepting patients, while they are increasingly seeking nature and outdoor experiences to avoid crowds and trying to be considerate of the society and environment of the host region.

In this context, some of the local governments, DMOs, and tourism-related businesses in Japan have gradually started working on sustainable tourism.

To restore tourism in such a way as to further minimize the impact and negative effects that it causes, and to make Japan the “tourist destination selected by travelers” in the post-pandemic era, it is essential to promote sustainable tourism, which is the style of travel that leads to environmental conservation and the preservation and succession of the tradition and culture of the whole region.

3. Contribution to the SDGs

As an organization that communicates the charms of Japan to the world with the aim of promoting inbound tourism to the country, the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) is going to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by managing the organization with respect for SDGs and considering environmental conservation in project activities more than ever. .

3-1. Promotion of organizational management that contributes to the SDGs

Up until now, JNTO has respected the concept of the SDGs, taking environmentally friendly measures to conserve energy and resources while fostering a comfortable work environment with an awareness of gender equality and diversity.

In conjunction with the formulation of this policy, JNTO has summarized the relationship between the efforts related to its organizational management and the goals of the SDGs with reference to the “Linking Corporate Initiatives to the SDGs” in the “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Application Guide for All Businesses: Book of Materials (2nd Edition)” published by the Ministry of the Environment in March 2020. (Attachment)

JNTO will continue to strengthen its efforts to achieve the respective goals of the SDGs by taking environmentally friendly measures such as going paperless and promoting diversity such as fostering a workplace where everyone can play an active role.

(Reference) Ministry of the Environment: “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Application Guide for All Businesses: Book of Materials (2nd Edition)”

http://www.env.go.jp/policy/sdgs/guides/SDGsguide-siryo_ver2.pdf (Japanese)

3-2. Consideration for environmental conservation in project activities

Besides communicating information online through its website and social media and through digital advertisements, JNTO conducts offline activities such as attending travel fairs, holding seminars and

business meetings, and inviting international travel agencies and media to Japan. Although we are already making environmental conservation efforts in some activities, JNTO will further seek for environmentally friendly proposals in the open competition for implementing offline projects to extend these efforts. Furthermore, we have summarized the recommended specific actions as follows.

Examples of environmental conservation efforts recommended in project activities

- Reduction of plastic use
Examples: reduction of use of plastic bottles, etc. and use of tumblers as alternatives, use of paper/biodegradable plastic straws as alternatives, and encouraging people to bring reusable bags
- Reduction of printed advertising materials
Examples: use of digital brochures and online surveys as alternatives
- Creation of environmentally friendly giveaways
Examples: use of recycled paper such as FSC® certified paper, and creation of repeatedly usable giveaways
- Proactive use of reusable equipment
Examples: use of digital signage and LED lights, and use of water servers
- Reduction of food loss at events

4. Sustainable Tourism and Universal Tourism promoted by JNTO

As the situation surrounding tourism has changed drastically after the COVID-19 pandemic, which is coupled with a growing interest in “sustainability” in the tourism sector, JNTO is committed to promoting sustainable tourism and universal tourism to contribute to the SDGs together with tourism professionals in Japan.

4-1. Promotion of sustainable tourism

JNTO views sustainable tourism in the following framework, which is directly connected to the realization of its management philosophy of: “Economic growth,” “Regional vitality,” “Cross-cultural understanding,” and “Japan brand power.”

JNTO’s concept of sustainable tourism

(1) Protecting and nurturing the regional “environment”

We will contribute to the conservation of nature and biodiversity by communicating information about cases where environmental resources are optimally used in tourism, such as tourism content with consideration for environmental burden.

(2) Protecting and nurturing the regional “culture”

We will contribute to the preservation and succession of traditional and cultural assets (tangible and intangible) that Japan has nurtured since ancient times by communicating them to the world in an attractive form and letting visitors experience them.

(3) Protecting and nurturing the regional “economy”

We aim to stably attract visitors and have them stay at various places in Japan, without being biased toward any specific region or time of year. At the same time, we will contribute to fostering a community that is a great place to live in, and to visit, by revitalizing the regional economy and creating stable, long-term employment through the promotion of experiences unique to the region and the purchase of local specialties, etc.

To achieve these goals, JNTO, utilizing the ability as a national tourism organization to communicate information widely and its network with tourism professionals in and outside Japan, is going to provide information about the regions working on the promotion of sustainable tourism as well as the tourism content (activities, tourist facilities, restaurants, accommodations, etc.) and inform the stakeholders in Japan about advanced cases in and outside the nation.

Through these efforts, we will contribute to the realization of an advanced country in sustainable tourism.

4-2. Efforts to be implemented by JNTO

(1) Collection of tourism content

JNTO has been communicating information about tourism charms all over Japan through its owned media (websites and social media) along with various types of information. In recent years, since 2018, as visitors to Japan have shifted their interest to experience-oriented tourism, JNTO has been collecting, organizing, and communicating information about experience-oriented tourism content (activities, tourist facilities, restaurants, accommodations, etc.) in which visitors can participate, based on the opinions of foreign experts. In this manner, we are making efforts to promote the charms of tourism unique to the region while trying to contribute to the revitalization of the regional community.

JNTO, through its projects to attract visitors to Japan, has been striving to underpin the efforts of regional communities, which would lead to the maintenance and improvement of the natural and living environment of each region, and to the succession of the local tradition and culture. From here on, we will focus more on collecting tourism content that embodies sustainability, such as consideration for environmental conservation, succession of the tradition and culture with stories rooted in the local community, and provision of opportunities for cooking using local products and experiences closely related to the local life.

Through these efforts, we are actively striving to meet the requirements of the Japan Sustainable Tourism Standard for Destinations (JSTS-D) described later, and promoting activities that would contribute to the coexistence between the local people and the tourism industry/tourists.

Examples of sustainable tourism content according to the JNTO's concept

- Outdoor activities and tourist/accommodation facilities that would have low environmental impact and allow coexistence with nature
- Tourist-participating travel plans that contribute to the protection of ecosystems
- Local traditional and cultural assets (tangible and intangible) that have been nurtured in the region since ancient times
- Experience of the local food culture, and the provision of, and/or cooking experience with, “locally produced, locally consumed” food
- Traditional arts and crafts that can be inherited by the future generations through experiences and purchases by visitors
- Accommodations and commercial facilities that utilize tangible cultural assets of the region, such as old folk houses
- Travel plans that involve participation in local festivals, events, etc. (that can be sustained through the participation of visitors)
- Experiencing the lifestyle of the local people at the destination
- Experience that promotes a deeper understanding of the destination's culture, etc. through tour guides
- Travel plans with which a portion of the proceeds is donated to the local community

(2) Promoting tourism content through owned media, etc.

JNTO will strengthen the communication of information about sustainable tourism content so that Japan will be selected as the travel destination by travelers who have an awareness of environmental conservation and a desire to contribute to the succession of the tangible/intangible tradition and culture of the destination through traveling.

Specifically, JNTO is actively introducing the tourism content collected in (1) above to visitors by providing it on its owned media (website, social media, etc.) and supporting coverage by the foreign media, etc. We will also support the creation and sales of Japan travel plans that incorporate sustainable experience-oriented activities and tourist facilities.

When communicating information, we will try to diversify visitors in terms of region and time of year in consideration of the various impacts of tourism on the local community.

4-3. Providing information on sustainable tourism to tourism professionals in Japan

(1) Publication of the Japan Sustainable Tourism Standard for Destinations (JSTS-D)

In June 2020, the Japan Tourism Agency and the UNWTO Regional Support Office for Asia and the Pacific formulated the Japan Sustainable Tourism Standard for Destinations (JSTS-D) to help local governments and DMOs manage their tourist destinations appropriately in response to the growing global interest in sustainability.

The JSTS-D is the index that is customized for the current situation of Japan, based on the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (GSTC-D) developed by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) in partnership with UNWTO. The JSTS-D, authorized by GSTC as an international standard that meets the GSTC-Recognized Standard, clearly specifies the efforts for the SDGs.

While communicating the Guidelines to inbound-tourism professionals in Japan through its website, seminars, etc. to convey the importance of sustainable tourism, JNTO will promote sustainability efforts in Japanese tourism that are based on the concept of the Guidelines.

(Reference) Japan Sustainable Tourism Standard for Destinations (JSTS-D)

<https://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/content/001350849.pdf> (Japanese)

(2) Providing information about traveler trends and advanced cases related to sustainable tourism in Japan and abroad

Through its overseas offices, JNTO obtains the local information such as the travelers' awareness of sustainable tourism and changes in travel industry trends abroad, and collects, through its extensive network, information about advanced efforts related to sustainable tourism at tourist destinations in Japan and abroad.

As part of our efforts to promote and raise awareness of sustainable tourism in Japan, we will provide such information to inbound-tourism professionals at home through our activities, including our website, seminars, and consulting.

4-4. Promotion of Responsible Tourism

UNWTO released a leaflet entitled "Tips for a Responsible Traveler" during the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism, based on the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (1999), which was adopted with

a view to maximizing the development of the tourism industry while minimizing its potential negative impact on the environment, cultural heritages, and societies across the world. In 2020, in response to the spread of COVID-19, UNWTO added some recommendations to ensure the safety and security of travel, in which they recommend that travelers “honor your hosts and our common heritage,” “protect our planet,” “support the local economy,” “travel safely,” “be an informed traveler,” and “use digital platforms wisely.” Along with these messages, they introduce examples of specific actions recommended to travelers.

When travelers pay attention to the nature and ecosystem of the places they visit and respect the local customs, manners, and way of living, such behavior would lead to environmental conservation, protection of traditions and cultures, and reducing congestion, which in turn would help ensure the regional sustainability. Moreover, since the outbreak of COVID-19, while local communities and tourism-related businesses accepting tourists are required to take measures to control the infectious disease, tourists should also take actions themselves to avoid the risk of infection in various travel scenes such as transportation and meals.

Through its information communication activities, JNTO promotes exchanges between the visitors and the local people while encouraging cross-cultural understanding. Besides providing information about the Japanese culture and customs, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when traveling in Japan, JNTO is also encouraging visitors to act as responsible travelers by introducing the “Traveling in the New Normal” in different languages, which outlines the behaviors expected of them.

Examples of specific actions recommended to be a responsible traveler

- Use travel plans with considerations for the local environment and culture, etc.
- Take actions with an awareness of reducing the burden to the natural environment
- Consume and buy local products
- Practice social distance and avoid crowds
- Respect the culture, customs, manners, etc. of the destination
- Acquire in-depth knowledge of the destination through tour guides, etc.
- Spread information about positive experiences at the destination

(Reference) UNWTO: The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET)

<https://www.unwto.org/global-code-of-ethics-for-tourism>

(Reference) UNWTO: Tips for a Responsible Traveler

<https://www.unwto.org/responsible-tourist>

(Reference) Travel Liaison Association (with cooperation from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and the Japan Tourism Agency): Traveling in the New Normal

https://www.jata-net.or.jp/virus/pdf/2006_newqetigtourismleafleteng.pdf

4-5. Promotion of Universal Tourism

JNTO has always been making diversity-conscious efforts for visitors to Japan, such as providing travel information for Muslims and vegetarians. We will further continue to promote universal tourism so that all travelers can travel comfortably, safely, and securely in Japan regardless of race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, whether they have disability or not, etc.

Specifically, for inbound-tourism professionals at home, we will keep them informed about the characteristics of various visitors and necessary systems required for accepting them, while for professionals abroad, we will strengthen the communication of information about our flexibly tuned responses to accept various travelers, including restaurants taking food and drink prohibitions into account and improved barrier-free facilities.

5. Conclusion

Since 1964, JNTO has been communicating information about travel in Japan to the world, with our management philosophy represented in the tag line which says, “Making Japan’s attractions its strength.”

Today, the charms of Japan represented by the abundant variety of regional environments, cultures, and economies are being threatened by global warming, various disasters, and its declining birthrate and aging population coupled with depopulation of rural areas. Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the business environment has been harsh not only for the tourism industry including accommodation facilities and travel agencies but also for public transportations that support the major transport arteries of the country; however, we can also see some positive signs.

When answering to surveys, many people in various countries and regions said that they would like to visit Japan. Thanks to the wisdom of mankind, vaccines are gradually being developed and put into use, and the hope of overcoming the disease is appearing in sight. In the post-COVID-19 world, more people are coming to prefer nature-oriented tours, and Japan’s inherent tourist attractions are gradually coming into the spotlight.

Under such circumstances, we must protect the source of Japan’s charms, that is, its nature and culture, and its economy underpinning them. After deliberations within JNTO, we have reached the conclusion that JNTO, as an organization which disseminates the charm of Japan, should play a role in this effort to preserve the precious resources in the country.

We will turn a crisis into opportunities, and will truly empower Japan.

JNTO is firmly determined to make contributions to the SDGs on our own and promote sustainable and universal tourism.

JNTO's organizational management efforts contributing to the SDGs

To understand the status of JNTO's efforts toward the SDGs in its organizational operations, the following summarizes the relationship between our current efforts and the goals of the SDGs, with reference to "Linking Corporate Efforts to the SDGs" in the "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Application Guide for All Businesses: Book of Materials (2nd Edition)" published by the Ministry of the Environment in March 2020.

(Reference) Ministry of the Environment: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Application Guide for All Businesses: Book of Materials (2nd Edition)

http://www.env.go.jp/policy/sdgs/guides/SDGsguide-siryo_ver2.pdf (Japanese)



Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives of and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Category	Efforts related to JNTO's organizational management	Other related goal
Health of employees	Following legal procedures when extending the maximum legal working hours for employees.	—
	Taking specific measures to prevent overwork, such as introducing a system for managing working hours, sharing working hours among the executive officers and employees, implementing "no overtime days," and reviewing personnel assignments.	Goal 8
	In addition to measures to prevent overwork, preventing workplace accidents through regular health checkups, health checks by industrial physicians, and confirmation of workplace conditions by the health committee.	Goal 8
	All executive officers and employees covered by laws and regulations are required to have statutory health examinations.	—
	In addition to measures to prevent overwork, improving working environments by taking work-life balance into consideration, such as staggered working hours and telecommuting.	—
Products/Services	In addition to environmentally friendly procurement, conducting procurements by considering environmental, social, and regional issues, such as procurement from facilities that employ people with disabilities.	—
Air pollution	In principle, using public transportation for work-related travel to practice environmentally friendly travel.	—



Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Category	Efforts related to JNTO's organizational management	Other related goal
Training of employees	Making investments in human resources to improve the staff's capabilities through various training programs and use of support systems for self-improvement.	Goal 8
	Conducting education and communication activities regarding the roles that JNTO should play for society, such as regular training sessions for the executive officers and employees to learn its management principles.	—



Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Category	Efforts related to JNTO's organizational management	Other related goal
Personnel	In personnel affairs including the personnel evaluation system, there is no substantive retaliation for exercising the rights provided by laws and regulations, nor is there any discrimination due to gender, disability, disease, nationality, education, religion, political support, etc.	Goal 8 Goal 10
	Many female employees are playing important roles in executive and managerial positions.	—
Prevention of human rights violations	Preventing human rights violations such as sexual harassment and power harassment through training, etc.	Goal 8
Environmental improvement	Providing working environment with consideration for the pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, elderly care, nursing, and other health conditions of the employees and their families.	—
	Contributing to the promotion of diversity through recruitment and personnel management, etc. regardless of nationality, with or without disability, etc.	Goal 10
	To further promote women's empowerment, providing systems that facilitate a balance between childbirth/childcare and work.	—
	Employees are actively taking paid leaves irrespective of gender.	—



Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Category	Efforts related to JNTO's organizational management	Other related goal
Saving electricity	Turning off the lights and air conditioning whenever possible.	—
	Setting the office automation (OA) equipment such as PCs and copiers to power saving mode.	—
	Wearing light clothing (Cool Biz) during summer.	—
Proper management	In addition to the efforts to save electricity, taking measures to reduce environmental problems, etc., including paperless meetings.	Goal 11



Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Category	Efforts related to JNTO's organizational management	Other related goal
Employment conditions	Regardless of the type of employment, a written labor contract that clearly specifies the working conditions is exchanged with all staff or a written notice of working conditions is issued.	Goal 10
	A code of conduct such as work rules is provided, which is always available for reference by the executive officers and employees.	—
	All eligible executives and employees are enrolled in labor insurance and social insurance.	—
Employment environment	[Restated] In addition to measures to prevent overwork, preventing workplace accidents through regular health checkups, health checks by industrial physicians, and confirmation of workplace conditions by the health committee.	Goal 3

	[Restated] Taking specific measures to prevent workplace accidents.	Goal 3
	In addition to measures to prevent overwork and workplace accidents, taking specific measures to preserve a healthy working environment for the staff, including the assignment of counselors, provision of an environment that allows consultation with occupational physicians, and a mentoring system.	—
	[Restated] Making investments in human resources to improve the staff's capabilities through various training programs and use of support systems for self-improvement.	Goal 4
Personnel	[Restated] In personnel affairs, including the personnel evaluation system, there is no substantive retaliation for exercising the rights provided by laws and regulations, nor is there any discrimination due to gender, disability, disease, nationality, education, religion, political support, etc.	Goal 5 Goal 10
Prevention of human rights violations	[Restated] Preventing human rights violations such as sexual harassment and power harassment through training, etc.	Goal 5
Employment of the elderly and the disabled	Contributing to the promotion of diversity by providing necessary working environment and through recruitment and personnel management, etc. regardless of nationality, with or without disability, etc.	Goal 10
	There are work roles for those aged 65 and older to play.	—
	Based on the relevant laws and regulations, making efforts to improve the employment environment for the elderly and people with disabilities and to employ them.	Goal 10



Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Category	Efforts related to JNTO's organizational management	Other related goal
Employment	[Restated] Regardless of the type of employment, a written labor contract that clearly specifies the working conditions is exchanged with all employees or a written notice of working conditions is issued.	Goal 8
	[Restated] Contributing to the promotion of diversity by providing necessary working environment and through recruitment and personnel management, etc. regardless of nationality, with or without disability, etc.	Goal 8
	[Restated] Contributing to the promotion of diversity by providing necessary working environment and conducting recruitment and human resource management regardless of nationality, with or without disability, etc.	Goal 5
	[Restated] Based on the relevant laws and regulations, making efforts to improve the employment environment for the elderly and people with disabilities and to employ them.	Goal 8
Personnel	[Restated] In personnel affairs, including the personnel evaluation system, there is no substantive retaliation for exercising the rights provided by laws and regulations, nor is there any discrimination due to gender, disability, disease, nationality, education, religion, political support, etc.	Goal 5 Goal 8



Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Category	Efforts related to JNTO's organizational management	Other related goal
Environmental consideration	[Restated] In addition to efforts to save electricity, taking measures to reduce environmental problems, including paperless meetings.	Goal 7
Recycle	Being strict about separating the garbage into paper, glass bottles, plastic bottles, burnable waste, non-burnable waste, etc.	Goal 12
Disaster	Having plans and preparations in place to continue operation in the event of a disaster.	Goal 13

Air pollution	[Restated] In principle, using public transportation for work-related travel to practice environmentally friendly travel.	Goal 3
Environmental consideration	[Restated] In addition to efforts to save electricity, taking measures to reduce environmental problems, including paperless meetings.	Goal 7



Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Category	Efforts related to JNTO's organizational management	Other related goal
Resource saving	Promoting the paperless system using ICT for meetings and conference materials, etc.	—
	Trying to reuse used paper, including that with one blank side, as much as possible.	—
Green purchasing	Promoting green purchasing and other environmentally friendly procurement practices.	—
	Formulating and announcing the "Environmental Goods Procurement Policy and Promotion System" for every fiscal year, and publishing procurement results.	—
Products/Services	Having the Eco Mark printed on JNTO's profile brochures, etc.	—
Recycle	[Restated] Being strict about separating the garbage into paper, glass bottles, plastic bottles, burnable waste, non-burnable waste, etc.	Goal 11



Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Category	Efforts related to JNTO's organizational management	Other related goal
Adaptation	[Restated] Having plans and preparations in place to continue operation in the event of a disaster.	Goal 11
Greenhouse gasses	Contributing to the reduction of CO2 emissions through efforts such as going paperless, saving energy, and using public transportation.	—