2021 Global Tourism UNWTO STUDENTS’ League
Take Action on Plastic Pollution Challenge

Challenge Theme: REDUCE. REUSE. RECYCLE.
Category: Middle School (11-13 year-old students)
Participation format: One team per school

1. INTRODUCTION

The UNWTO World Tourism Students League, run within the UNWTO Academy, creates an innovative environment to empower and motivate youth to get involved with the tourism sector and participate in this world students tourism league. The participants get real-time experience from the sector by creating and presenting innovative solutions for the challenges that the sector is facing nowadays. All challenges are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This specific challenge is placing the focus on plastic pollution which is addressed mainly within the framework of SDG12 on Responsible Consumption and Production but also in other interconnected goals such as SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15, respectively on climate action and the protection of marine and terrestrial ecosystems. You can learn more about the SDGs by watching this video.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how interconnected we are and how much the health of nature has direct impact on our lives, well-being and health. Taking care of nature is therefore key to a prosperous and sustainable future for all. At the same time, hygiene measures undertaken to tackle the pandemic have increased the demand for disposable plastic items with masks and gloves already being found in the natural environment of tourism destinations.

Plastic pollution is one of the major environmental challenges of our time and tourism has an important role to play in contributing to the solution. On the one hand, much of the plastics used in tourism are made to be thrown away and often cannot be recycled, leading to large amounts of pollution. On the other hand, clean landscapes and coastlines and the possibility to observe wildlife are key elements of tourism destinations and therefore should be protected from plastic pollution.

2. OBJECTIVES

You can be the change you want to see in the world! Watch this video.

We believe in the Youth’s power to act and mobilize others. Young people are key to innovative solutions suggesting a bottom-up approach to tackle the challenges of our time. The youth are the future leaders who can start contributing today. Therefore, we are inviting you to participate in this Challenge.

Plastic pollution is a major environmental problem which requires thinking together and acting together. In every crisis there is an opportunity and therefore, we should ensure that when tourism restarts again after COVID-19, the sector is leading by example in the sustainable use of plastics.

By participating in this Challenge, you will:
• Encourage tourism businesses, policy makers and travelers to take action on plastic pollution
• Raise awareness of innovative solutions that tourism businesses, policy makers and travelers can implement to address plastic pollution
• Spread the word about the importance and potential to reduce, reuse and recycle plastics
• Contribute to the implementation of SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production and other connected SDGs with environmental focus
• Call upon tourism stakeholders to restart tourism after COVID-19 prioritizing the sustainable use of plastics to prevent plastic pollution

3. CHALLENGE

3.1. ASSIGNMENT
Create a work of art (poster, mural, sculpture) to remind tourists and/or tourism businesses about the importance to take action on plastic pollution, as an essential element for the restart of tourism after COVID-19.

3.2. CHALLENGE
• In what ways can the tourism sector (tourists/businesses) contribute to tackling plastic pollution?
• What changes would you like to see in the way plastics are used in tourism once the sector recovers from COVID-19? You as a tourist and also part of a host community!
• Is your message compelling and ambitious but at the same time realistic?
• How does your work of art show ways of reducing, reusing and recycling plastics?

Some hints:
• You find this plastic item unnecessary!
• You find a way to reuse and upcycle these plastic items!
• You want to make sure that these plastic items will be recycled!
• You want to send a message to tourists and tourism businesses and organizations!

The work of art should represent/depict plastics or be made of/with plastics. Make sure that you are not using new materials to create your work of art but rather reusing and recycling plastics (and other materials).

3.3. STEPS

1. Get your Team together if you are working with fellow students.
2. Review the resources provided under section 5.
3. Discuss among the members of the team to agree on what you would like to represent, the materials that you plan to use and what would be the message behind the work of art and to whom you are addressing it (tourists and/or businesses).
4. Work as a team to create a work of art.
5. Take pictures of the work of art. The quality of the image must be 300dpi.
6. Think of a location where you would love to place the work of art to influence as many people as possible.

3.4. SUBMISSION

✓ Your submission package will be a compressed ZIP file (the zip file name must contain the name of your School).
Your ZIP file will contain the following:
  a. Three photos of the work of art (from different angles). The quality of images should be 300 dpi and the file names must contain the name of the School.
b. A 2 minute video (recorded with a phone is good) where you describe the team, the process that the team followed to create the work of art, what is the message that it represents and where you would love to place the work of art to influence as many people (including tourists) as possible. The name of the video file must contain the name of the School.

✓ Please upload your package of submission through your access on the UNWTO Students’ League Platform.

✓ The Teams will have 6 weeks to answer the Challenge. THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS 27 JUNE 23’59 CEST (Madrid Time).

✓ The language for the submission is English.

4. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Your submission will be evaluated by the Jury according to the following criteria:

✓ Innovation and originality
✓ Implementation model and feasibility (e.g. team work and correct use of the plastics)
✓ Impact, accuracy and effective contribution to solve the challenge/alignment with the Challenge
✓ Awareness/Contribution to the SDGs

The judges evaluate these aspects individually from 1 to 10. The score given to the team is the sum of the scores of each jury member given for each aspect. The maximum score for this specific challenge (middle school) is 40 points per submission.

5. TIPS & RESOURCES

5.1. PLASTIC: GOOD OR BAD

Plastics are not bad. It is probably the opposite, as a material, plastics are amazing! The problem is ours, as we have not been using plastics correctly since they were created.

If we get to know plastic better, its production, life cycle and proper usage, we can make sure to:

1) reduce the amount of unnecessary plastics that we use in our daily lives and when we travel;
2) reuse those plastics that we still need to use, and;
3) recycle as much as possible to give plastics the many lives they are meant to have instead of becoming waste.

Did you know that:

- Plastic was created in 1907 and has been a key material to the progress of modern society given its resistance, durability, low weight and relatively low cost.
- Plastic is a wonder of technology; it revolutionized medicine with life-saving devices!
- Millions of products that we use nowadays are made of plastic or include plastic parts such as for instance, computers, cell phones, water bottles, coffee cups, bags, etc.
BUT?! Are we aware of what plastic is made of? What happens when we throw it away, and how it can affect our environment and health?!

- Plastics are not biodegradable, which means that bacteria in the environment cannot break them down (as it would happen to an apple or banana peel). Therefore, they can take centuries to decompose and while they decompose, they release micro particles called microplastics which pollute our rivers and the ocean.

- Most of plastics are made of petroleum. More than 99% of plastics are derived from fossil fuels and contribute to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. If current trends continue, plastic could account for 20% of the world’s oil consumption by 2050.

- Get to know the nature of plastics by watching this video!

There are different types of plastic. To manage well and reduce, reuse and recycle, we need to know them! If you look at the plastic material around you, you will find the recycling codes below.
5.2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM AND PLASTICS

We need to take action on plastic pollution if we want to continue to enjoy nature. We need to appreciate and protect our environment more than before since it has impacts on our lives and health! So, we need to be responsible when we travel as well as when we welcome tourists to our own cities and town! If you want to see what plastic pollution has caused, take a look at these pictures!

We need to remember that:

- We have not managed plastics sustainably and therefore we are now facing a massive plastic pollution problem. If we continue producing, using and throwing plastics at the same pace, by 2050 there will be more plastics in the ocean than fish!
• Plastics are broadly used in hotels and destinations. Think of straws for drinks, shampoo bottles and other amenities, laundry bags, plastic cups, takeaway boxes, etc. Many of these plastics are made to be thrown away after one use (they are called single-use plastics).

• With a lot of tourism taking place in coastal and other natural areas, plastics from the tourism sector can be found in the environment.

• Plastic pollution is a problem because of its long-lasting effects as it never fully degrades. Actually, once thrown away, one plastic bottle also travels in the nature and goes through a lot of stages, at least 450 years to break down! Much longer than we imagine!

• Plastic pollution can have impacts in the beauty of destinations but also in human health.

• Get to know what really happens to the plastic you throw away by watching this [video](#)!