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As awareness of the climate and biodiversity crises grows, international, environmentally conscious visitors are increasingly valuing countries that invest in keeping their beaches clean and require their hotels to be less wasteful.

The Dominican Republic, one of the world"s top tourist destinations, has decided to act. To set the country"s tourism sector on a path of sustainability, the government has pledged to reduce marine and land-based pollution, cut the consumption of materials, and diminish waste arising from tourism.

The new tourism plan, developed in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme, includes ways to measure and reduce food waste, increase energy efficiency and promote the use of renewable energy in hotels and other accommodation options.

It builds on two years of research, data collection and analysis, which helped identify hotspots of greenhouse gas emissions and low efficiency in the use of natural resources in hotel value chains. International travel was not part of the analysis.

The resulting Roadmap for Low Carbon and Resource Efficient Accommodation in the Dominican Republic was launched by UN Environment in May 2019, in Punta Cana. The event was attended by 75 representatives from the tourism sector.

The roadmap sets five targets for the accommodation sector in the Dominican Republic: to reduce by 25per cent greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (from a 2020 baseline), reduce food waste by half, a 25per cent of reduction in non-renewable energy use, the complete elimination of single-use plastics and the uptake of a sustainability certification for hotels.

"This roadmap would not have been possible without strong cooperation between the public and the private sector," says Olga Rosario, Director of the Sustainable Production and Consumption Department the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. "It"s the first time they have collaborated to establish clear



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targets to achieve sustainable development for the tourism sector."

The roadmap was also made possible through a project funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety through its International Climate Initiative. Karsten Sach, Director-General, International and European Policy, Climate Policy, welcomed the recent developments in the Dominican Republic's tourism sector.

"Supporting the formulation and implementation of countries" nationally determined contributions to mitigate climate change is at the heart of the International Climate Initiative," he says. "Proliferating sustainable patterns for consumption and production is key to transforming the tourism sector to low-carbon, resource-efficient operations. We are pleased that through the Initiative's funding, we could contribute to those far-reaching regulatory and administrative changes in such a vital economic sector for the Dominican Republic."

The analysis revealed that many environmental impacts related to tourism happen outside hotels. For example, 57 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions of the tourism value chain are associated with farming for food served in the hotels. Energy used in cooling and air conditioning is the most significant source of emissions in the case of hotels.

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