

Sustainable islands for the future:
Multi-stakeholder Forum on Responsible Business Practices for
Sustainable Water Management on Resort Islands

1 December 2017

JW Marriott Phuket Resort and Spa, Phuket, Thailand

Background and purpose

Water crises present one of the most significant global risks over the coming decade, rated third by the World Economic Forum in terms of potential impact.¹ However, despite being a critical resource for our survival, water remains undervalued and underpriced and thus overused. As a consequence, the world's groundwater – our main source of freshwater - is used much more quickly than it is being replenished.² With high economic and population growth coupled with impacts of climate change, it is predicted that large parts of Asia will suffer serious water shortages by 2050.³

Tourism is very important source of income and jobs in many Asia-Pacific economies. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, travel and tourism accounted for 9% of GDP and 8.7% of employment in the region if indirect impacts are included. The region attracted some 300 million international tourist arrivals in 2016, generating nearly 455 billion USD in visitor exports. By 2027 arrivals are expected to nearly double to reach 549 million tourist arrivals per year.⁴

At the same time, tourism puts a heavy stress on water resources, as tourists use a lot more water on holiday than at home.⁵ Resorts also use substantial amounts of water to operate restaurants, provide cleaning services, maintain gardens, pools, spas and other resort facilities. Moreover, since tourism often concentrates traveler flows in time and space, (e.g. in dry regions or in areas where dry season is also peak tourist season, islands with limited water supplies, and where renewable water reserves are limited) water plays a determining part both in everyday operations and potential growth of hotels, but also in the potential growth of tourism locations. Sustainable supply and thus management of water is therefore critical both for the resort industry and for important tourism destinations in the region.

The need to invest in good water management is particularly evident in island communities. The considerable number of visitors have put a huge strain on water in many of the popular island locations in the region. This does not only impact small tropical islands, but even large destinations such as Bali and Phuket have experienced serious water shortages,⁶ with some Phuket resorts even

¹ World Economic Forum (2017), *Global Risks Report 2017*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2017/>

² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/01/why-world-water-crises-are-a-top-global-risk/>

³ <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/03/160330152053.htm>

⁴ World Travel and Tourism Council (2017), *Travel & Tourism: Economic Impact 2017 Asia Pacific*, pg.1. The figures represent total contribution to GDP and employment respectively. The direct contribution represented 2.8% of GDP, and 3.7% of GDP.

⁵ Eurostat (2009). *Medstat II: 'Water and Tourism' pilot study* Eurostat, European Commission. Available from: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-78-09-699/EN/KS-78-09-699-EN.PDF

⁶ <https://www.gardenof.life/water-crisis-bali/>

reliant on water delivery by truck to meet resort needs, with high resulting costs.⁷ Moreover, some key tourism destinations have also experienced problems with sea water quality due to lack of wastewater treatment.^{8 9}

However, many destinations are lacking sufficient public infrastructure to facilitate sustainable management of water. Critically, wastewater treatment is many times not centrally provided, or fully enforced, and much of wastewater goes untreated, with resulting impacts both on water access, the quality of sea water and surrounding ecosystems.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations member states in 2015, include 17 goals of which one dedicated to water and sanitation (SDG 6: “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”). The United Nations has also designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has been working with the private sector to promote responsible business practices in the region since 2005. This event is a follow-up to a roundtable on water scarcity in the resort industry held August 2016. At that event, resort chains and water related companies from the region came together to present good practices and innovative technologies and methods for increasing water use efficiency in the sector. The purpose of this forum event is to build on and broaden last year’s discussion to the South-East Asia regional level, focusing on island tourism destinations in South-East Asia, and:

- Share innovative and cost-efficient business practices and technologies for ensuring sustainable water use and re-use in large and small resorts, for potential inclusion in a best practice guide
- Share good practices in Government policies and programmes for water access and reuse
- Outline critical public and private sector actions needed to improve cost effectiveness in water use and reuse, to increase the sustainability of tourism destinations
- Identify areas for potential future action to ensure equitable and responsible management of water resources in water-stressed tourism locations, including through innovative business practices and public-private collaboration.

Participants

Invited participants will include governors and senior officials responsible for water management and access issues in key island tourism destinations in South-East Asia; representatives of key Ministries at national level; representatives of resorts operating in island communities; representatives of companies offering innovative solutions for water management; and civil society representatives.

Partners and collaborating agencies

The meeting will be organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with the Marriott Thailand Business Council.

For more information, and to attend, see: <http://www.unescap.org/events/forum-responsible-business-practices-sustainable-water-management-resort-islands>

⁷ Phuket News: Water truck crashes in Kata -<http://www.phuketgazette.net/phuket-news/Water-truck-crashes-Kata/8126>

⁸ <http://www.manilatimes.net/boracay-on-the-edge-of-disaster/168264/>

⁹ <http://www.chiangraitimes.com/scientist-warns-phuket-heading-towards-an-environmental-crisis.html>

Programme

08.30 – 09.00	<i>Registration</i>
09.00 – 09.30	<p>Opening and welcome remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Marc Proksch, Chief, Investment and Enterprise Development Section, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP • Mr. Prakob Wongmaneerung, Vice Governor of Phuket, Thailand • Ms. Kanokkittika Kritwutikon, Phuket Office Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) • Mr. Sean Panton, Co-Chairman and Director of CSR, Marriott Thailand Business Council
09.30 – 10.40	<p>Water access – prospects, challenges and solutions for the region</p> <p>Presentations on status of water access and wastewater recycling situation in the Asia-Pacific region, and on selected islands.</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Chamniern Vorratnchaiphan, Senior Advisor, IUCN Thailand Programme</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Marit Nilses, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP • Mr. Somsawat Chaisinsorn, Director, Phuket Royal Irrigation Project • Dr. Thammarat Kootatep, Associate Professor, Asian Institute of Technology • Dr. Sineenart Puangmanee, Lecturer, Environmental Science, Faculty of Science, Phuket Rajabhat University • Dr. Chirapol Sintunawa, Vice President and Secretary General, Green Leaf Foundation, Thailand • Dr. Chamniern Vorratnchaiphan, Senior Advisor, IUCN Thailand Programme
10.40 – 11.00	<i>Break</i>
11.00 – 12.30	<p>Increasing water efficiency and reducing waste water: Good company practices</p> <p>Presentations by companies that have implemented innovative water efficiency and wastewater treatment measures, and discussions on what hotels can do to increase water use efficiency and waste-water recycling and reuse.</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Sean Panton, Co-Chairman & Director of Social Impact & Sustainability, Marriott Thailand Business Council and JW Marriott Phuket Resort and Spa</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Suchart Vikittipong, Chief Operation Officer, Katathani Phuket Beach Resort & The Shore at Katathani, Katathani Collection of Resorts • Mr. Arnfinn Oines, Social & Environmental Conscience, Soneva • Ms. Antika Sriraksa, General Manger, Pakasai Resort, Krabi

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. James Murphy, General Manager of Pullman Phuket Panwa Beach Resort and Area General Manager – Southern Thailand, Luxury Hotels Brands, Accor hotels • Ms. Jayne Macdougall, Director of Risk Management, Le Meridien, and Phuket Hotels Association Environment Working Group member • Mr. Wayan Warta, Director of Environment, Bali Hotels Association and General Manager Amadea Resort & Villas Seminyak and PrimeBiz Kuta Hotel (through video-link)
12.30 – 13.30	<i>Lunch and exhibition (technical solution providers)</i>
13.30 – 15.00	<p>Innovative ideas and technology solutions</p> <p>Presentations of innovative ideas and technology solutions for expanding water access, improving water use efficiency and increasing waste-water recycling and reuse, and discussions on how to increase the spread of innovative solutions, including to smaller operators.</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Chirapol Sintunawa, Vice President and Secretary General, Green Leaf Foundation, Thailand</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Thammarat Kootatep, Associate Professor, Asian Institute of Technology • Mr. Hendra Gupta, officer, BORDA Overseas Research & Development Association, Indonesia/Thailand • Mr. Guruprakash Sastry, Regional Head – Infrastructure, Infosys, India • Mr. Ryan Kohler Co-Founder and CEO, Generation Water • Mr. Akash Bhavsar, Skyquest Technology Group and WaterQuest Hydroresources, India (through video-link) • Dr. Songpol Boonsawat, Viro Group Inc., USA
15.00 – 15.30	<i>Break</i>
15.30 – 16.50	<p>Reducing water use and increasing wastewater treatment in tourism areas: what role for public policy and public-private partnerships?</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Marc Proksch, Chief, Investment and Enterprise Development Section, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP</p> <p>Roundtable discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the challenges and opportunities for ensuring increased public provision of water and centralized wastewater treatment? • How can public-private collaboration help improve circular water management and increase water access? • What is the role of the regulatory agencies? What is the role of pricing policies? • Could public-private collaboration to ensure ‘sustainable tourism locations’ help frame collaboration towards improved water management? • How can the agenda be moved forward?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the key leverage points, obstacles and challenges?• How can regional collaboration support progress?
16.50 – 17.00	Summary and closing