



## **Tourism, the Pacific Islands gateway into the Green Economy**

By Online Editor  
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*By Evan Wasuka, in Rio De Janeiro*

For Pacific Islands countries, tourism has been touted as the key to successfully embracing the green economy.

As countries around the world embrace a greener and cleaner development, the United Nation's High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHLRS), Under-Secretary-General, Cheick Sidi Diarra, says Pacific Island countries can utilize their exotic location and natural environment to benefit from the green economy.

Speaking after a Rio+20 side event, Diarra says tourism is one area Pacific Island countries can be competitive in.

“Tourism in my view is the best element, the best asset for Small Islands and the second one is the marine resources, fisheries, coral, biodiversity marine.”

The aim of the green economy is to combine efficiency with sustainability. When this happens Diarra says Pacific Island countries will then become sustainable in their production and consumption, improving the livelihood of people.

According to Diarra, the main benefit for Pacific nations to embrace the green economy, is the preservation of their islands and its very limited resources.

“If the living standards cannot be improved, we have to stabilize it at the level that it is right now.”

It is predicted that small islands states will suffer the most as a result of the impact of climate change, through sea level rising, depletion of coral, while marine resources and biodiversity would progressively decline if conservation measures are not taken.

Although the green economy is a relatively new - catch phrase - Diarra says the concepts involved are not foreign to vulnerable countries, including Pacific Island countries.

“Many of them can rightly say that they are already involved in green economy practices and activities and in certain instances may have already adopted policies that have successfully promoted green growth.

“There is a need, therefore, to identify and build on these success stories from these vulnerable countries on this issue and replicate them where applicable.”

He said his office has been advocating the need to better understand and utilize the Tourism, Biodiversity and Culture nexus to protect and conserve these important natural assets which in turn could contribute towards economic growth and their sustainable development.

“In the case of Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), with their narrow resource base, the oceans and its marine resources is a key sector that continues to contribute to economic growth in many of them.

“In several SIDS the marine resources presents the only viable resource base for economic development and growth – proceeds from which directly contributing towards funding their national efforts to meet their sustainable development objectives and eradicate poverty.

Diarra says the small island countries can be successful through targeted policies that, among other things, would encourage private and public sector partnerships, stimulate green growth and create job opportunities.

“With the necessary support of their partners, I am confident that they can lead the way forward in making green growth and the green economy a reality.

“LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, many of which are not industrialized nations, are well positioned to take full advantage of this new development paradigm to leapfrog into more sustainable practices.

“The one certain thing that would make green growth and the green economy a reality in the vulnerable countries and the wider world, for that matter, is that there has to be shift in the way we think of development, our approaches to it and what it entails.”

SOURCE: ONE TELEVISION/PACNEWS