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Global Sustainable Tourism Council

**GSTC MONITORING
AND EVALUATION
REPORT 2023**

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1. Remarks from GSTC Chair, Luigi Cabrini



The history of GSTC is one of resilience and growth. Our first activities back in 2007 were funded by the UN Foundation and supported by partners from UN bodies, prominent NGOs, and major tourism leaders from the private sector. We have been able, as our reach and relevance increased, to attain financial independence. The demand for GSTC services such as destination assessment, training, and the then incipient recognition and accreditation programs, allowed the organization to establish a small secretariat that is today a larger team of professionals and committed staff. Membership fees became also a backbone of the budget as our own sustainability provides more credibility to an organization that promotes sustainable tourism.

The relevance of the deliverables we provide is demonstrated by the number of our members and their importance in the tourism sector. GSTC membership includes many Governments from all the continents, reputed destinations, OTAs, major hotel chains, cruising companies, etc. They see value in the global criteria framework and its related programs. GSTC provides a comprehensive vision of tourism sustainability and the tools to implement it.

This report aims at providing quantitative and qualitative information on the outputs of GSTC work. I trust that the readers will appreciate our efforts and results towards a more sustainable tourism.

2. Remarks from GSTC CEO, Randy Durband



The GSTC Board of Directors, staff, and members are proud of the accomplishments we have made since our inception in 2007. During that time, we have developed and managed the GSTC Criteria as the “go-to” global standards for sustainable travel and tourism and have had many successes in supporting positive impacts from their application.

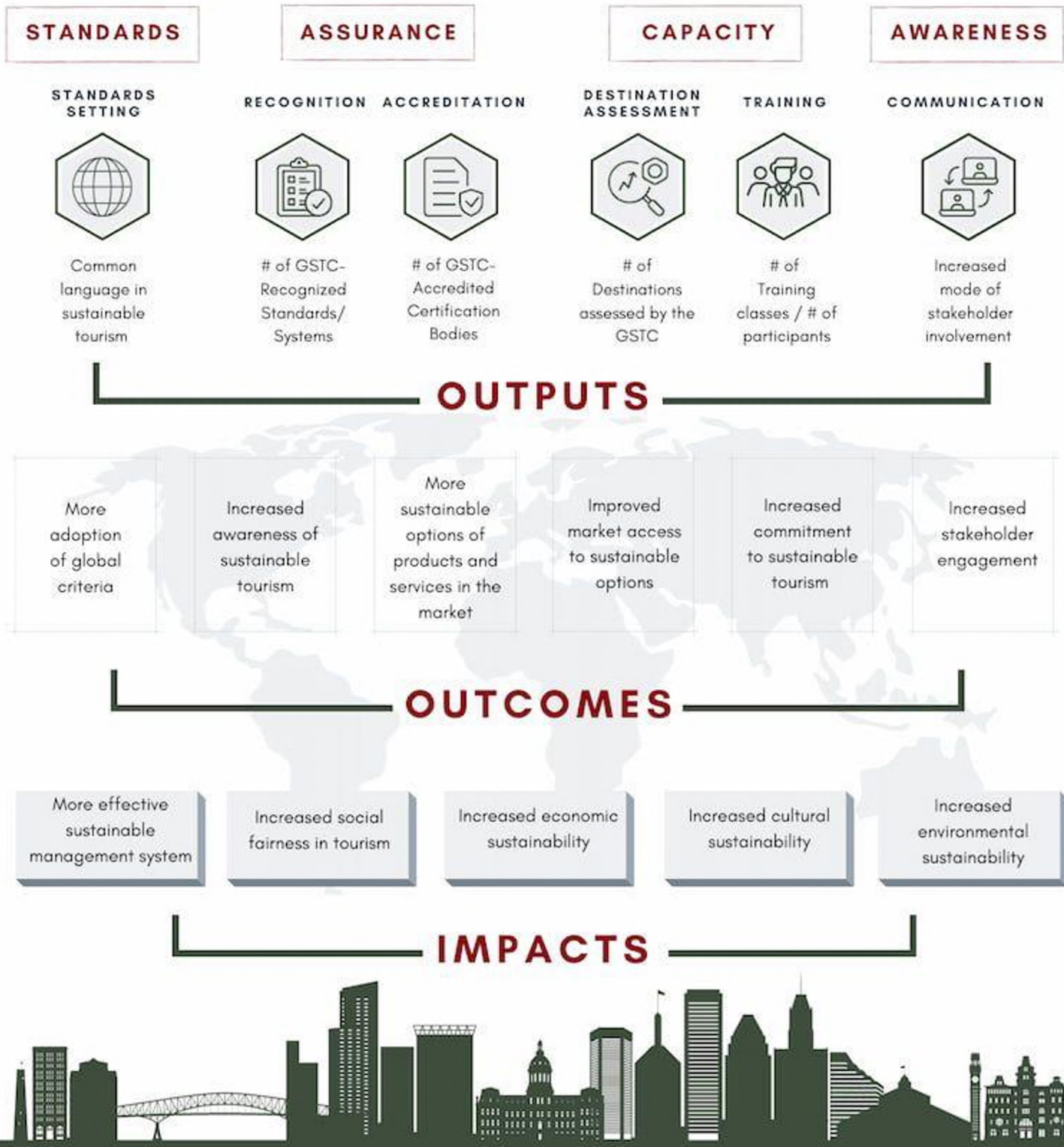
However, for much of our history, we lacked sufficient resources to suitably report on those myriad impacts. In recent years, we have gradually changed that, happily now reaching the point when we proudly provide this, our first annual Monitoring & Evaluation Report. We frequently hear reports of the indirect influence the GSTC Criteria has had on positive impacts for more sustainable forms of travel and tourism. In this report, we share our methodology and learnings based on our internal review of the widespread application of the GSTC Criteria and our programs.

GSTC is a vast network of experts operating from a small, mostly virtual team. To that global network of players, we extend our deep gratitude for their commitment to a more sustainable world by engaging with our programs. Thank you! To those readers who are not a part of that, we invite you to engage by leveraging the power of globally developed and recognized standards — the GSTC Criteria — into your organization's practices.

3. Theory of Change



IMPACT PATHWAYS STRATEGIES



4. Executive Summary



The Global Sustainable Tourism Council's (GSTC) mission is to be an agent of change in sustainable travel and tourism by fostering the increased knowledge, understanding, adoption, and demand for sustainable tourism practices. In 2023, GSTC adopted its Monitoring and Evaluation System Version 2 (M&E System-V2) to track progress toward meeting the goals outlined in our Theory of Change. (See in [our website](#) and on the previous slide)

The Monitoring and Evaluation System helps the GSTC evaluate and improve its effectiveness and impact in all the diverse activities it carries out. It also enables GSTC to be accountable to its stakeholders and ensure credibility by providing transparent and verifiable information.

The primary purpose of this 2023 Monitoring and Evaluation Report is to share the indicators we have established for each service we provide and their results for the same year, as well as share current and future projects that will improve our outcomes and impacts. The GSTC Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators form the basis of performance monitoring for the GSTC Monitoring and Evaluation System and this report. GSTC has developed a set of 102 Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators.

This report covers **33 indicators: 12 for the Membership and Engagement process, 10 for the training process, 1 for Criteria, 4 for the Standard recognition process, 4 for Accreditation, and 2 related to the Destination activities.** As we collect more data, we will publish annual Performance Monitoring Reports that contain a greater proportion of indicators, always according to what is most relevant to the stakeholders.

4. Executive Summary

a. Performance

Since this is our first Monitoring and Evaluation report, we have yet to have performance data compared to previous years.

b. Progress

GSTC established and published its Monitoring and Evaluation System, including our Theory of Change and a set of indicators for each of our services to track our outcomes and impacts in the tourism world systematically.

c. Plans for 2024

Commission an external outcome or impact evaluation

Measure Monitoring and Evaluation indicators; create Monitoring and Evaluation report; conduct lessons-learned session inside the GSTC Team.

Commission an internal audit of our assurance activities based on ISO 17011:2017

Carry out an internal audit of our accreditation system via IAF tools.

Prepare internally to be a code-compliant member of ISEAL (Based on the integrated Code of Good Practice to be published by ISEAL in 2024) and apply in 2025.

Develop traceability systems globally.

Broaden the measurement of our indicators to include more satisfaction measures in the different activities we do.

5. Introduction of GSTC



The Global Sustainable Tourism Council® (GSTC) establishes and manages global standards for sustainable travel and tourism, known as the GSTC Criteria.

There are two sets: Destination Criteria for public policy-makers and destination managers and Industry Criteria for hotels and tour operators.

They are the result of a worldwide effort to develop a common language about sustainability in tourism. They are arranged in four pillars: (A) Sustainable management; (B) Socioeconomic impacts; (C) Cultural impacts; and (D) Environmental impacts. Since tourism destinations each have their own culture, environment, customs, and laws, the Criteria are designed to be adapted to local conditions and supplemented by additional criteria for the specific location and activity.

The GSTC Criteria form the basis for the Accreditation of Certification Bodies that certify hotels/accommodations, tour operators/transport providers, and destinations as having sustainable policies and practices in place. GSTC does not directly certify any products or services; but provides an accreditation program to accredit Certification Bodies.

The GSTC is an independent and neutral organization, legally registered in the USA as a 501(c) non-profit organization that represents a diverse and global membership, including national and provincial governments, leading travel companies, hotels, tour operators, NGOs, individuals, and communities – all striving to achieve best practices in sustainable tourism. It is a virtual organization without a main office, with staff and volunteers working from all six populated continents. Financial support from donations, sponsorship, and membership fees allows us to provide services at low costs and to create, revise, and make available the GSTC Criteria. GSTC is an ISEAL Community Member.

6. GSTC Monitoring and Evaluation System

Our Monitoring and Evaluation System takes a Theory of Change approach. Our 'theory' is that as we create and maintain a common language of sustainable tourism through our GSTC standards, accredit certification bodies to carry out audits for certifications to tourism businesses and destinations, recognize standards that align with the GSTC criteria, make destination assessments, provide training in matters related to sustainable tourism and auditing the GSTC criteria, and increase stakeholder involvement in our cause through communications; the desired positive impacts will be realized in order to deliver on our mission and vision (see our Theory of Change infographic at <https://www.gstccouncil.org/about/gstc-impact/>).

The Monitoring and Evaluation System was created to help GSTC evaluate and improve its effectiveness concerning all the activities GSTC performs. It also enables GSTC to be accountable to its stakeholders and ensure credibility by providing precise and verifiable information. We will start in 2024 to publish annual Performance Monitoring Reports to indicate the extent to which outputs and outcomes are being achieved.

Outcome and impact evaluations will also be carried out in the short term to identify the effects of the GSTC activities.

GSTC is careful about communicating data and information and aims to do it simply and clearly. GSTC ensures that claims made in reports or statements that it issues about any outcomes and/ or impacts of our activities are accurate and linked to verifiable data.

The GSTC Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators form the basis of performance monitoring for the GSTC Monitoring and Evaluation System and this report.



My heartiest congratulations to GSTC on your first annual monitoring and evaluation report. Since The Ascott Limited joined as a member in 2022, we have been honoured to have the opportunity to partner with GSTC in driving GSTC criteria adoption for the hospitality industry. Our strategic MoU in 2023 to provide training opportunities for the industry via our training arm, Ascott Centre for Excellence, in Singapore was testament to that. As a group, we have committed to achieve 100% GSTC certification by 2028. To date, five properties have been certified with more in the pipeline. By the end of this year, we expect one in five of every Ascott property in the world to be GSTC-certified, keeping on track with our 2028 commitment. In particular, we aim to achieve GSTC certification for more than 95% of our accommodation units across the Singapore portfolio.

Beh Siew Kim, Chief Financial and Sustainability Officer, Lodging,
CapitaLand Investment and Managing Director, Japan & Korea, **The Ascott Limited.**

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

a. GSTC Membership and Engagement



558

members in 2023,
including individuals

87%

renewal of
membership in 2023

16.20%

of members participated
in webinars

43.21%

of members are satisfied
with GSTC understanding
of their needs

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

a. GSTC Membership and Engagement

26

webinars in 2023

634

webinars participants

43%

of satisfaction with webinars on average

236k

Web users in 2023

90827

of followers on Social Media by Dec 2023

330

News articles mentioned GSTC in 2023



7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

a. GSTC Membership and Engagement



351

Participants in
the GSTC Global
Conference in 2023

87%

of Satisfaction with
the GSTC Global
Conference

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

b. GSTC Training / Auditor Training



170

participants in
auditor training
classes in 2023

10

auditor training
classes in 2023

143

have completed the
GSTC Hotel Criteria
Course by 2023

44

have completed the
GSTC Tour Operator
Course by 2023

56

have completed the
GSTC Destination
Criteria Course by 2023

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

b. GSTC Training / Public Training



78

regular courses
in 2023

1810

training
participants
in 2023

71.60%

of participants who
answered survey
are very satisfied
with courses

57.1%

of participants
passed the
exam in 2023

44

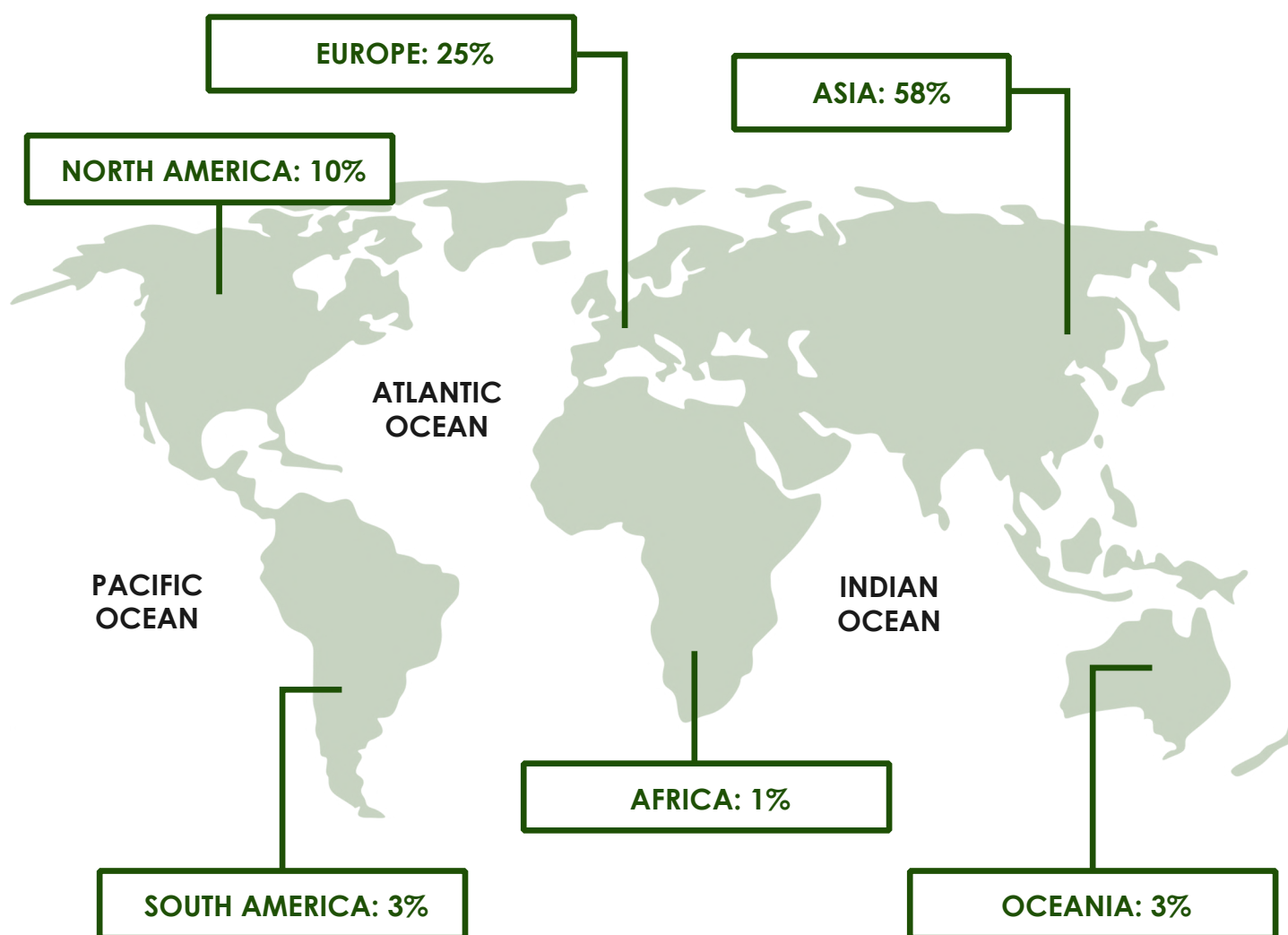
Authorized
trainers
in 2023



7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

b. GSTC Training / ii. Public Training

The geographical scope of public training participants for 2023



7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

c. GSTC Criteria



We currently have **2 sets** of GSTC Criteria: the GSTC Destination Criteria and the GSTC Industry Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators.

We plan to revise the GSTC Criteria for Industry in 2024.

We are currently developing 2 sets of Criteria: one for MICE (covering venues, event organizers, and events/exhibitions) and one for Attractions. For MICE, we held 5 Criteria Development Workshops: 2 in 2022 in Korea and Spain and 1 in 2023 in Türkiye.

We also organized 2 workshops in collaboration with 2 of our destination members: the city of Berlin and the country of Malta. We also have done 2 public consultations and 1 feasibility assessment with organizations in the MICE industry. We will publish the MICE Criteria on February 29th, 2024.

Regarding the Attraction Criteria, we have engaged with stakeholders and received their feedback during GSTC conferences in 2022 and 2023 in Korea, Spain, and Türkiye. Since September 1st, 2023, the first-ever draft of the Criteria has been worked on, and the public consultation for Attraction Criteria began on January 15th, 2024.

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

d. GSTC Recognition

38

GSTC Recognized
Standards
for Hotel

20

GSTC Recognized
Standards for Tour
Operators

15

GSTC Recognized
Standards for
Destination

Some Standards are recognized by the GSTC for more than one sector, i.e., GSTC-Recognized Standard for hotel and tour operator. For more information, please go to:

www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/gstc-recognized-standards



11030

Certified Hotels by
GSTC- Recognized Standards by 2023

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

e. GSTC Accreditation



8

GSTC – Accredited
Certification Bodies
by 2023

947

Certified hotels by
Accredited Certification
Bodies by 2023

8

Certified TO by
Accredited Certification
Bodies by 2023

33

Certified destinations by
Accredited Certification
Bodies by 2023

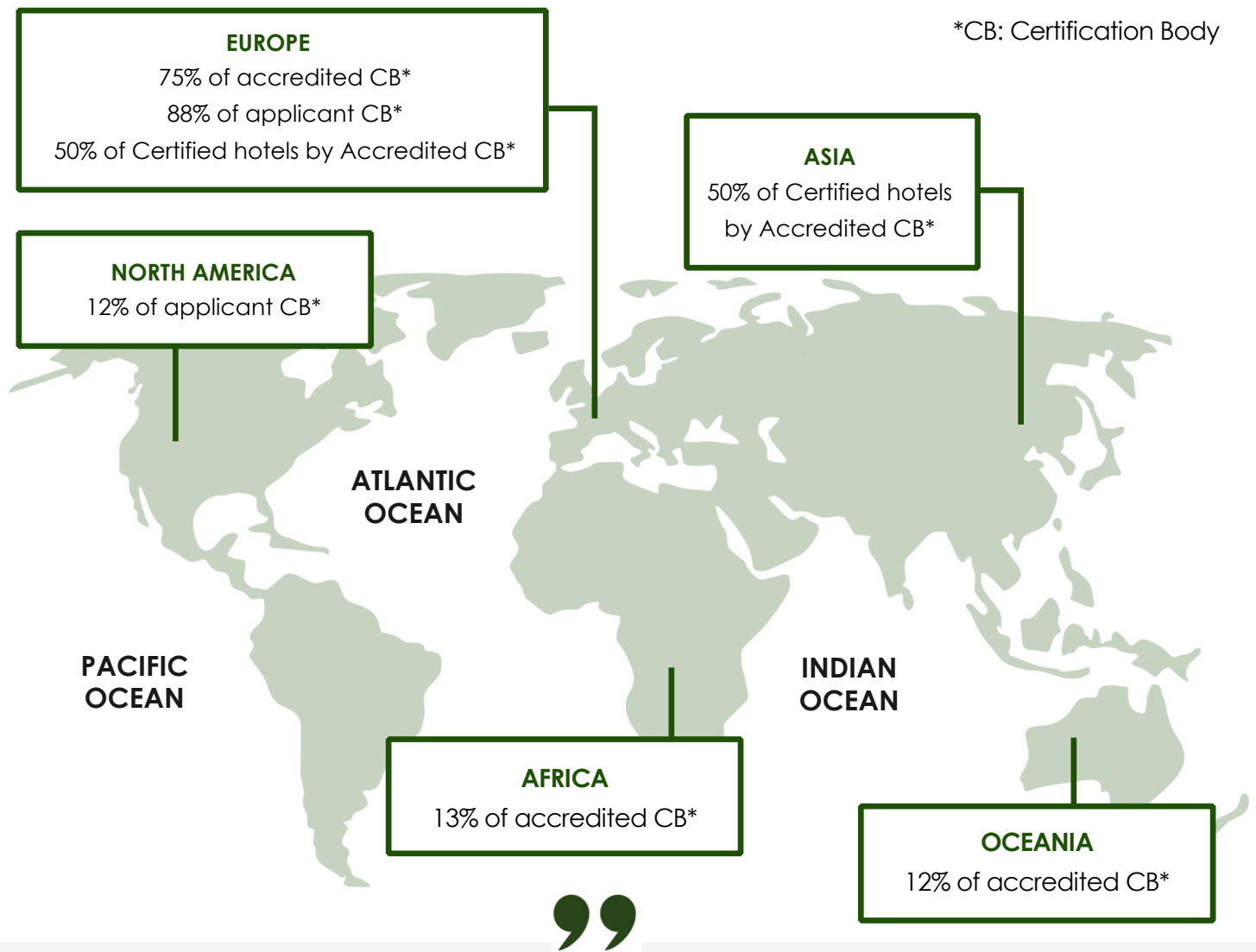
8

Applicant Certification
Bodies by 2023

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

e. GSTC Accreditation

Distribution Map of GSTC-Accredited CB and Applicant CB



The Mauritius Standards Bureau started collaborating with GSTC some ten years back, involving several activities such as recognition of its national standard, training of auditors and accreditation as a Certification Body. This collaboration has been so enriching and today we are proud to be a GSTC-Accredited Certification Body running our own national programme. Already, our status as a GSTC-Accredited Certification Body is making an impact not only in Mauritius, but at the regional level as well.

We seize this opportunity to express our warmest congratulation to GSTC for the publication of its first monitoring and evaluation report. This shows their remarkable achievements in their endeavour towards Sustainable Tourism globally. Without doubt, this is a major stepping stone in shaping the path towards worldwide Sustainable Tourism.

The Mauritius Standards Bureau, **Republic of Mauritius.**

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

f. GSTC Destinations



We have **82 destination members** whom we engage with at least twice per member. We hosted **1 in-person** meeting in Antalya (40 attendees), and **2 online members meetings** (59 attendees).

We conducted **6 Destination Assessments** (1 of which was a Re-Assessment) and **4 destination advisory projects**.

We published **1 Destination Stewardship Yearbook** and **3 Destination Stewardship Reports (DSR)**, which included 24 stories. The DSR was opened 1460 times on Mailchimp and viewed 1187 times on our website. The Destination Stewardship Working Group (DSWG) met 5 times and produced a **Destination Stewardship Starter Kit**.



Los Angeles Tourism recognizes that U.S. destinations currently lack a commonly accepted set of standards by which to measure their sustainability efforts – a baseline consideration in understanding where there are opportunities to meaningfully improve tourism sustainability and equity. As such, we are proud to be a GSTC member and strongly support broad adoption of GSTC's destination sustainability framework, which is fully consistent with the U.N. SDGs. We look forward to supporting this critical work now and well into the future.

Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

f. GSTC Destinations



6

Destinations
assessed in 2023

3

Destination
stewardship Reports
published in 2023

7. GSTC Activities and Impacts

g. Activities that Create Impact: WTTC-GSTC Collaboration



In 2023, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) established an encouraging new partnership, aligning to unite the existing WTTC Hotel Sustainability Basics while paving the way for a stepped progression toward GSTC Certification for sustainable hotels.

This alliance will help the good practices in sustainable tourism that both GSTC and WTTC promote to reach larger and more diverse markets, as well as support cooperation and a united vision of sustainability within the world of sustainable tourism.

8. Unintended effects of GSTC work detected



Since our Monitoring and Reporting system is new, we have yet to detect any unintended effects of the GSTC work. We will continue to work on the system in order to establish what our impact and unintended effects are following established methodologies.

Once our monitoring and evaluation system reaches some maturity and we commission an external outcome or impact evaluation, we will be able to show with hard data what the unintended effects of the GSTC work are and take action to minimize them.

9. Lessons from the Year 2023 and Improvement Plan



Since our Monitoring and Evaluation System started last year, we have focused on establishing a robust Monitoring and Evaluation System, establishing outcome and impact measurements for all our internal processes, training the GSTC staff on what the system entails, and registering the measurements.

We will continue to work hard in 2024, measuring indicators and improving the GSTC Monitoring and Evaluation system while taking into account the lessons we will learn along the way to improve throughout the year.

At the end of 2024, we will establish the challenges and lessons learned between the GSTC team and an improvement plan for 2025.

GSTC Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2023



**The GSTC Team
Thank You and
Look Forward to
an Impactful 2024!**



 **GSTC[®]**
Global Sustainable Tourism Council

