

# Chapter 4. The Hotel Industry

## *Abstract*

The hotel industry is a major player in the global economy, and a number of its related trade organisations have emphasised the role the industry can play in contributing to the successful achievement of the SDGs. It remains clear, however, that the industry faces a number of significant challenges in pursuit of this undertaking – what are the priorities for the industry as a whole? Are new sustainability strategies required to specifically respond to the SDGs? How can the tensions between sustainability and commitments to business development and continuing economic growth be successfully managed? This provides the backdrop and context for this chapter, which examines if, and how, eight leading hotel groups and two industry bodies have begun to address the SDGs, and offers some general reflections on the industry's engagement with the SDGs.

## *Introduction*

The World Tourism Organisation and the United Nations Global Compact Network Spain (2016) have argued that “tourism is one of the most dynamic and far reaching economic sectors, and can make a decisive contribution to the achievement of the SDGs” (p.28). Further, the World Tourism Organisation and the United Nations Development Programme (2017) “are committed to inspiring leadership and facilitating collaboration among all stakeholders to realize the SDGs and targets that are spelled out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (p.10). At the same time, the International Tourism Partnership (2018) suggested that the SDGs “send out a clear call to action for the wider industry about the critical importance of using the UN SDGs as a focal point to drive responsible business in hospitality” (para.4). From outside the industry, Jones et al. (2017) have argued that “while the tourism and hospitality industry can be seen to have a vital role to play in the drive towards a more sustainable future, the leading players within the industry must address a number of challenges as they look to make a meaningful contribution to the achievement of the SDGs” (p.10).

The eight hotel groups reviewed in this chapter all feature in the “Top Ten Leading Hotel Groups” (Tourism Review, 2017). As the largest players within the hotel industry, the selected companies might be expected to reflect innovative thinking in their approach to the SDGs. Marriott International, the world's largest hotel group, is a US multinational hospitality company, headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, and owns some 6,500 properties in over 120 countries. AccorHotels is a French multinational company that owns, manages and franchises hotels, resorts and vacation properties and operates over 4,000 hotels in 100 countries. The Wyndham Hotels and Resort is the world's largest hotel franchise company and trades as a number of brands, including Wyndham, Ramada and Days Inn, in over 70 countries. Hilton is a major US based hospitality company, and either owns, manages or franchises over 570 hotels and resorts in 85 countries. The Hyatt Hotel Corporation is headquartered in Chicago, US, and manages and franchises over 700 hotels, resorts and vacation properties in some 50 countries. Meliá Hotels International, a Spanish based hotel chain, is the market leader in resort and urban hotels within Spain and operates 375 hotels in 40 other countries. InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG®) is a UK based multinational

hospitality group and operates more than 5,600 hotels in over 100 countries. The final hotel group, the NH Hotel group, is a Spanish based hotel chain and has some 375 hotels in 29 countries, principally in Europe and Latin America. In addition, two hotel organisations are included in the review. The International Tourism Partnership (ITP) is a worldwide organisation comprising some of the world's largest hotel companies focusing on improved sustainability; and the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO "promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability, and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide" (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2018a, para.2).

### ***Overview of the Hotel Industry and the SDGs***

The selected hotel companies have addressed the SDGs in a variety of ways. Some of the companies referenced specific SDGs, whilst others stressed their own sustainability practices that could be seen as being in support of some of the SDGs (Table 4.1). IHG noted "the SDGs are wide ranging and we have identified the seven where we believe that, in partnership with our owners, colleagues and wider stakeholder community, IHG can make the greatest impact" (Green Hotelier, 2017, para.4). More specifically, IHG targeted seven of the SDGs, namely SDGs 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 17 in line with the company's "responsible business approach across the hotel life-cycle" (Figure 4.1).

Hilton (2017) reported that the company had properties in over 100 countries and that the company was looking "to harness our global hospitality mission to help drive local solutions in the communities, where we operate, aligning our action to the SDGs" (p.17). Hilton addressed all 17 of the SDGs by aligning each of them to specific targets. The company notes, for example, "another way we seek to incorporate the SDGs in our work is by framing our programmatic areas to align directly with the targets and indicators for specific SDGs. Our Safe Water Strategic Initiative, for example, is directly aligned with SDG 6: Clean Water Sanitation" (Hilton, 2018a, para.11). In his "Executive Statement" for Hilton's 2017 Corporate Social Responsibility Report, Christopher J. Nasetta, President and Chief Executive Officer, suggested "at Hilton, we're more and more inspired every day to use our hospitality for good and as a truly global company, we are serious about our role in helping the international community reach the UN SDGs" (Hilton, 2017, p.2).

The Hyatt Hotel Corporation (2018) noted "our corporate responsibility work supports the mission of the UN SDGs" (para.5). The company's corporate responsibility strategy embraces six key sets of issues, namely, "our people", "our communities", "human rights", "our planet", "responsible sourcing" and "responsible seafood", each of these sets of issues is aligned to a number of the SDGs (para.2). Hyatt's commitment to "our people", for example, is aligned to SDGs 5, 8 and 10, the company's commitment to "our planet" is aligned to SDGs 6, 7, 12, and 13 and the commitment to responsible sourcing is aligned to SDGs 8, 12, 14 and 15. Similarly, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts (2018) aligned its material Corporate Social Responsibility goals to ten of the SDGs, namely SDGs 1, 2, 3 4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 15 and 17.

In 2018, Marriott International (2017) launched "Serve 360", which the company claimed was "guided by the UN SDGs" (para.3). Ray Bennett, Chief Global Officer, Global

Operations at Marriott International, argued “as the global hospitality leader with properties and associates across 125 countries and territories, Marriott International has a global responsibility and unique opportunity to be a force for good – from helping to reduce carbon and water use to providing our associates with human trafficking awareness training” (Marriott International, 2017, para.2). Four “priority areas” are identified, these being “advancing the resiliency and development of our communities”; “reducing the company’s environmental impacts, sourcing responsibly and operating sustainable hotels”; “helping people prepare for jobs in the hospitality industry” ; and “creating a safe and welcoming world for associates and travellers alike” (para.4). These can be seen to broadly accord with SDGs 3, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

SDG/ Hotel Group	Hilton	Marriott	Accor	NH Hotels	Wynd- ham	Hyatt	ITP	UNWTO	Meliá	IHG
1	X				X					
2	X				X					
3	X	X		X	X				X	
4	X				X		X			
5	X				X	X			X	
6	X				X	X	X			X
7	X					X				
8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9	X		X							
10	X	X	X			X	X		X	X
11	X	X	X							X
12	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
13	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
14	X		X			X		X		
15	X		X		X	X				
16	X			X					X	
17	X			X	X		X			X

Table 4.1 SDGs addressed by hotel groups and organisations

In addressing reducing environmental impacts, for example, the company is looking to “minimize our environmental footprint by sustainably managing our energy and water use, reducing our waste and carbon emissions and increasing the use of renewable energy. We employ innovative technologies to plan, implement, track and communicate how we operate responsibly to mitigate climate-related risk, benefiting our business and the communities in which we operate” (Marriott International, 2018, para.2). More specifically the company have committed to reducing water use by 15%, carbon emissions by 30% waste by 45% and food waste by 50%, all by 2025, to train all associates to recognise the signs of human trafficking and to embed human rights criteria in recruitment and sourcing policies.

In similar vein, AccorHotels (2016a) reported looking to contribute to the SDGs through its “Planet 21” sustainable development programme. The company listed key achievements from the programme under four headings, namely, planting for the planet, the fight against the sexual exploitation of children, eco-design and sustainable food. In evidencing the first of these achievements, the company reported, “at AccorHotels, we ask our customers to reuse their towels. Savings made on water and energy are used to fund tree planting. One tree is planted every minute” (para.5). In promoting healthy and sustainable food, AccorHotels reported its commitment to “offering healthy, balanced and high quality food” including “local products” and “products grown in our kitchen gardens” as well as “reducing food waste” and “banning the use of overfished species in our restaurants” (para. 8). The company notes “we believe that it is our duty to help spread knowledge and promote the progress of all stakeholders in the hotel industry – both businesses and guests. With this collaborative approach to sustainable innovation in mind, we launched Planet 21 Research, a platform for sharing knowledge about sustainable development in the hotel industry” (AccorHotels, 2016b, para.1).



Figure 4.1 IHG’s Responsible Business Approach across the Hotel Life Cycle (IHG, 2018, p.11)

An examination of the company's socio-economic footprint in 2016 revealed that AccorHotels supported "880,000 jobs and mainly creates wealth in our host countries" (AccorHotels, 2016b, para.3). A study of the environmental footprint of AccorHotels (para.4), conducted in 2011, covered the entire life cycle of the company's activities. This study revealed that the five major environmental impacts were energy consumption, water consumption, waste production, climate change and water eutrophication. The company used the study to encourage, educate and empower its employees to initiate new ideas that reduce its environmental impacts. The Planet 21 strategic themes and related initiatives align with many of the SDGs, notably SDGs 8-15. More specifically, in 2018, the company noted that Planet 21 "establishes commitments for 2016–2020 across the six focus areas of guests, partners, people, communities, food and buildings" and identified SDGs 2, 7, 8, 12 and 16 as being of critical importance for the hotel industry as a whole (AccorHotels, 2018, p.14).

Meliá Hotels International published its "Global Corporate Social Responsibility Model" in 2015. The company notes "the SDGs aim, among other things, to end extreme poverty, combat inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change. As a market-leading company, Meliá felt that it should step forward and make the promotion of these SDGs an essential part of its own strategy. In 2015 Meliá matched the SDGs with the goals of its own CSR model to align Company goals with the universal goals inspired by the United Nations" (Meliá Hotels International, 2016, para.5). The company's CSR model is based around six key principles, namely "human rights and childhood", "employability", "local development and the fight against climate change", "university and knowledge sharing", "culture", and "leadership and reputation" (Meliá Hotels International, 2016, para.2).

More specifically, the hotel group noted that "by integrating the SDGs into its Global CSR Model, Meliá aims to reinforce its own approach to:

- Ensure a consistent management model that seeks continuous improvement
- Promote a model of responsible management in the value chain
- Contribute to the generation of social and economic value
- Maintain a proactive attitude in the identification, prevention and mitigation of risks
- Make the fight against climate change a key objective in hotel management
- Strengthen long-term relationships based on trust, respect and transparency" (para.8).

The company concluded "this is how Meliá is working towards moving towards a sustainable future from a responsible present" (para.9). Overall, although not explicitly stated, there is some correlation between, on the one hand, the company's CSR model, its principles and approach and, on the other, several of the SDGs, notably 3,5,8,10,12,13 and 16.

The NH Hotels Group claimed that the SDGs had been used along with other "criteria", including the ten principles of the UN Global Reporting Compact and the G4 guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative for Sustainability Reporting, to prepare its 2017 Annual Report (NH Hotels Group, 2018, para.7). Here, the focus is on the SDGs in which NH Hotel Group has a direct impact. This builds upon their earlier statement that "the company has identified the SDGs with the most direct impact on its daily activities. These include Goals 3 (Good Health & Wellbeing), 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production), 13 (Climate Change), 16 (Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships)" (NH Hotels Group, 2016, p.41).

The International Tourism Partnership (ITP) is “a global sector-led organisation, bringing together the world’s most powerful hotel companies in an alliance focused on a single ambition: to lead the industry through example with clear and quantifiable commitments to improved sustainability” (International Tourism Partnership, 2018a, para.13). The organisation notes its belief that “the hotel industry can be a force for good and make a positive contribution to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and to the COP 21 climate agreements. By working together, we can drive change further and faster than on our own. Our vision for 2030 is for sustainable growth and a fairer future for all” (ITP, 2018b, paras.1&2). The organisation notes “the critical importance of using the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – also called the Global Goals – as a focal point to drive responsible business in hospitality” (para.3). ITP identifies SDGs 4, 6, 8, 10 and 13 as those that align with their own goals where the hotel industry can make a particular impact (Figure 4.1). In addition, however, as noted by Emily McLeish, Senior Brand and Marketing Communications Manager, “our work also closely aligns to SDG17. We bring together the leading hotels from around the world to work collaboratively on issues affecting society and the environment. We also use the strength of this network to initiate cross-sector collaboration – working with governments or other industry bodies where we have shared aims – such as tackling modern slavery in the value chain” (E. McLeish, personal communication, May 30th 2019)



**Youth Employment:** To collectively impact one million young people through employability programmes by 2030, thereby doubling our current impact on youth unemployment. (SDGs 4 and 8)

**Water:** To embed water stewardship programmes to reduce the number of people affected by water scarcity and identify ways to address water scarcity. (SDG6)

**Carbon:** To embrace science-based targets, and encourage the wider industry to join in reducing emissions at scale. (SDG13)

**Human Rights:** To raise awareness of human rights risks, embed human rights into corporate governance, and address risks arising in the labour supply chain and during construction. (SDGs 8 and 10)

Figure 4.2 International Tourism Partnership: Our Goals (ITP, 2018b, para.3)

The World Tourism Organisation (a UN entity) notes, in reference to the SDGs, that it “is placing its efforts and tireless work in contributing with its technical assistance and capacity-building to the achievement of these global goals. UNWTO is working with governments, public and private partners, development banks, international and regional finance institutions, the UN agencies and international organizations to help achieve the SDGs, placing an emphasis on Goals 8,12 and 14, in which tourism is featured” (UNWTO, 2018, para 2).

### ***Actions and Activities regarding Specific SDGs***

In addressing SDG1, Hilton’s “target alignment” stressed its commitment to “eradicate extreme poverty”, “implement social protection systems” and to provide “equal rights to economic resources” (Hilton, 2017, p.17). More specifically, Hilton reported being “committed to opening doors for 1 million young people by 2019 to connecting, preparing or employing them” and being “committed to connecting, preparing or employing refugees in Europe” (Hilton, 2017, p.17). Further, Hilton reported that as a founding member of the Global Apprenticeship Network, the company had supported over 2,500 apprenticeships and encouraged training legislation in Egypt, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UK and US.

As regards SDG3, NH Hotels (2016) note “work is done on three concepts: nutrition, wellbeing and local flavour. That is, responsible consumption and positive impact on health and the social and environmental areas. In this way, the Company is ambassador of a healthy diet and healthy habits, not only for guests, but also for all stakeholders. Evidence: Healthy breakfast offered at 368 hotels in 28 countries and enjoyed by over 6,000,000 customers” (p.41). Hilton’s target alignment to SDG6 embraced “access to safe drinking water”, “adequate sanitation and hygiene” and “water resource management” (Hilton, 2017, p.18). In evidencing these targets Hilton reported reducing water consumption by 20% per square foot of hotel space since 2008, signing on for the UN’s Chief Executive Officer Water Mandate and launching a number of global water stewardship pilot schemes in high risks regions in the US, South Africa and China.

SDG8 is one of the three SDGs actively promoted by the United Nations World Trade Organisation (2018b). They note that “by giving access to decent work opportunities in the tourism sector, society- particularly youth and women- can benefit from enhanced skills and professional development. The sector's contribution to job creation is recognized in target 8.9 ‘By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products’” (para.6). This aspiration is supported by NH Hotel Group (2016), who state that “the capacity to create jobs is one of NH Hotel Group’s values. The Company works on a number of initiatives in collaboration with the public sector and third-sector organizations, not only to improve employability and fight against inequality, but also to create opportunities. Evidence: Youth Career Initiative (YCI) is a high impact international initiative for the training and professional development of youth at risk of exclusion, of which NH Hotel Group is a member” (p.41). IHG (2018) note that “aside from our own business, we also recognise the potential positive impact we can bring to our communities by building skills and education in hospitality”, and more specifically record that “more than 13,531 people improved their chances of employment through our IHG Academy in 2018, and we also launched a new programme for communities and charitable giving, True Hospitality for Good” (p.6). Additionally, IHG (2016) claimed, in the context of



SDG11, that “our hotels provide critical economic stimulation in the communities within which they operate, including in developing countries” and that “we ensure our hotels are prepared and able to play an active role in supporting those impacted by disasters, helping local communities get back on their feet quickly” (p.9).

For SDG12 and SDG13, NH Hotel Group (2016) comment that they have plans “that specifically promote the achievement of these two Goals” these being the “Green Savings Project: Savings in consumption by the Company (water, energy and other related aspects, such as laundry)” and the “Green Hotel Project: Sustainable actions with customers”. The company cites as evidence that “all hotels submit monthly reports on water and energy consumption, as well as carbon footprint. Also, 273 of hotels use green energy sources and 131 have an external environmental certification” (p.41). Hyatt’s (2018) commitment to “our planet” (para.3) includes setting goals to reduce energy and water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions at its hotels, pursuing a variety of waste management and recycling strategies, and building a culture of environmental stewardship amongst hotel owners and developers.

Hilton (2017) identified specific target alignments in addressing SDG13, namely to improve education and awareness of climate change and to promote mechanisms for climate change-related planning. In addressing these targets, the company reported reducing carbon emissions by 30% per square foot of hotel space and energy consumption by 20% per square foot of hotel space since 2008, activating 1,800 environmental projects in 1,000 communities during Earth Week in 2017. They also claimed to be the first major hospitality brand to have “science-based greenhouse gas targets approved by the Science Based Targets initiative” (p.19). Additionally, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, which funds not for profit organisations working to improve the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people throughout the world, illustrated some of its work in contributing to the SDGs. On the one hand, the Foundation outlined its belief that philanthropy has an important role to play in supporting the SDGs through “advocacy, facilitating implementation, helping to measure success and in training the next generation of leaders capable of promoting evidence-based solutions that address human development, health and economic and environmental needs at the core of the SDGs” (Hilton Foundation, 2018a, para.6). On the other hand, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation has argued that “people underestimate the universality of the global goals, assuming they only apply to developing countries” whereas the “we at the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, firmly understands the relevance of the goals at the domestic level” (Hilton Foundation, 2018b, para.1).

In aligning the company’s targets with SDG15, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts (2018) noted the aim was to promote and expand best practices for biodiversity protection across their properties and to partner with suppliers to make a meaningful impact to protect forests. For SDG16, NH Hotel Group (2016) note that “work in relation to this Goal focuses on ethical and effective commitments at all levels. In line with the best ethics and corporate governance practices, a series of rules and principles have been established, which must govern the professional conduct of employees and are intended to involve and engage all stakeholders”. The company cites as evidence “recent updating of the Code of Conduct, training and awareness on the Code of Conduct, and supplier approval policy” (p.41). The targets for SDG17 for Wyndham Hotels and Resorts (2018) were to continue to advance sustainable development through active participation in industry initiatives with the World



Travel and Tourism Council, International Tourism Partnership, Department of Energy, and other global partners.

Goal	2018 highlights	Our approach
	<p>We launched two water stewardship projects in London and Delhi to help us identify key issues where we can develop and apply water innovations that can be replicated in other water stressed locations.</p> <p>In 2018, we achieved a 3.1% reduction in water use per occupied room.</p>	<p>In 2016, we undertook a comprehensive water risk assessment that has helped us identify where to focus our six water stewardship projects.</p>
	<p>We offered quality work experience to 13,531 people through our IHG Academy.</p> <p>Our learning and development strategy ensures that we continue to invest in our colleagues, helping them reach their potential whilst delivering an exceptional guest experience.</p>	<p>With tourism generating one in 10 jobs globally, we are uniquely positioned to help more people into employment and deliver local economic impact through our entire estate.</p>
	<p>Listed by the Hampton-Alexander Review in the top 10 of companies for female representation across our Executive Committee and their direct reports.</p> <p>100% rating in the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index – making IHG a best place to work for LGBTQ equality for the last four years.</p>	<p>Our colleagues represent many cultures, religions, races, sexual orientations and backgrounds and our diversity and inclusion strategy reduces any potential equalities. To help grow our strategy, we launched our Global D&amp;I Board, led by our CEO and IHG Senior Leaders.</p>
	<p>Our hotels globally implemented 7,825 IHG Green Engage solutions.</p>	<p>Our online sustainability platform, the IHG Green Engage system, enables our hotels to operate more sustainably through solutions they can implement in property to report and manage their carbon, energy, water and waste.</p> <p>When it comes to our local communities, we work with our hotels to ensure that they are prepared and able to play an active role in the event of a disaster, ensuring our local communities can get back on their feet.</p>
	<p>During 2018, our Procurement and Cost Efficiency (PaCE) team built a responsible procurement team to help drive our responsible business agenda through our supply chain.</p> <p>In partnership with the IHG Owners Association, we launched the Renovation Donation Initiative to reduce the amount of materials reaching landfills, and support the important work of non-profit organisations in the local communities, including workforce development and hospitality skills training programmes.</p>	<p>We have established a Strategic Supplier Management Office (SSMO), which works with our strategic suppliers to maximise realised supplier value and minimise risk through effective supplier relationship management.</p> <p>Through our Greener Stay programme, we reward our loyalty members who defer housekeeping services. Hotels can operate more efficiently by reducing energy and water use, as well as reducing the use of chemicals in the housekeeping process.</p>
	<p>In 2018, we reduced our carbon footprint by 2.2% per occupied room.</p> <p>Named industry leading for a second consecutive year in the 2018 S&amp;P Dow Jones Sustainability Indices.</p> <p>Our hotels and offices using IHG Green Engage sustainability platform avoided costs of \$67 million.</p>	<p>Our online sustainability system IHG Green Engage recommends 200 Green Solutions that help our hotels and offices to reduce their energy, water and waste.</p>
	<p>Our franchise business model means that working in collaboration with our hotel owners and teams is an essential part of how we embed our approach to responsible business across our hotel estate.</p> <p>Working with the IHG Owners Association, we can implement new processes to help our hotels operate in a more sustainable way.</p>	<p>We continue to collaborate with industry associations, NGOs, government and community organisations to embed our programmes and to deliver positive change.</p> <p>Through our longstanding membership of the International Tourism Partnership (ITP), we collaborated with industry peers to develop collective solutions to key sustainability challenges.</p>

Figure 4.3 IHG's Highlights and Approach in support of the SDGs (IHG, 2018, p.10)

## Discussion

A number of issues emerge from the above review that merit reflection and discussion. First, the findings reveal marked variation in how the selected leading hotel groups have begun to address the SDGs. One group, Hilton, directly addressed all 17 SDGs, while IHG specifically targeted seven of the SDGs, providing detail on how they were approaching each one and performing against their targets (Figure 4.3).

Some of the hotel groups claimed that their corporate sustainability goals and targets had been aligned with the SDGs, whilst others suggested that the SDGs had been a guide for, and/or integrated into, the development of their sustainability strategies. Further, this process of alignment has been pursued in a general rather than a specific manner, and there has been little or no attempt to directly map corporate goals and targets to specific SDGs. Where hotel groups claim to have aligned a relatively small number of key corporate priorities to the SDGs, for example, the link to the specific SDGs can be seen to lack clarity. As such, it will be difficult for the hotel groups that have adopted this alignment or integration approach to assess how they are contributing to specific SDGs. On the one hand, such contributions become part of wider corporate contributions to sustainability and on the other this approach does not suggest that the majority of the selected hotel groups are “using the UN SDGs as a focal point to drive responsible business in hospitality” (International Tourism Partnership 2018a, para.12).

Second, and related to the above point, many of the selected hotel groups’ commitments to the SDGs are couched in terms of business imperatives, not least efficiency and continuing growth, as well as sustainability. Ray Bennett, Chief Global Officer, Global Operations at Marriott International has commented, “we recognize that how we do business is as important as the business that we do. Incorporating environmental and social initiatives, including human rights awareness training, into our business is not only the right thing to do, it has a direct impact on our profits and beyond” (Marriott International, 2017, para.2). It is perhaps indicative of this paradox that only three of the hotel groups studied here leant support to SDG14, one of the three SDGs highlighted by UNTWO as being of particular importance for the tourism sector. United Nations World Trade Organisation (2018b) note “coastal and maritime tourism, tourism's biggest segments ... rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be a part of integrated Coastal Zone Management in order to help conserve and preserve fragile ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote the blue economy” (para.8).

Third, there are issues concerning the data that is required to measure progress and the processes and procedures that need to be in place to monitor that progress. Regarding SDG12, for example, Target 12.b notes it is imperative to "develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products". United Nations World Trade Organisation (2018b) recommend the adoption of “sustainable consumption and production (SCP) practices” by the tourism industry, which “can play a significant role in accelerating the global shift towards sustainability”. They note that such practices “result in enhanced economic, social and environmental outcomes” (para.7). There was a range of responses to this by the hotel groups studied here, but encouragingly, several have set clear relevant targets. For example, and as noted above, Marriott Hotels has committed to specific measurable reductions in water use, carbon emissions and food waste by 2025. IHG (2018) have developed a “Green Criteria” for suppliers that is now “included with our BSI supplier assessment programme”; and the company aims to “increase the percentage of suppliers that meet IHG Green Criteria” (p.17). The company also report on water reduction use and on “carbon footprint per occupied room (kgCO<sub>2</sub>e)” (p.35), the target for the latter being a reduction of 6-7% between 2018 and 2020” (p.33).

## ***Conclusion***

A number of trade organisations have argued that tourist industry can play a major role in contributing to the SDGs. The hotel groups studied here have addressed the SDGs in different ways, with the majority aligning the SDGs with their own sustainability objectives and actions, or incorporating them in some manner into their existing strategies. IHG and NH Hotels addressed the SDGs more directly, but overall it is apparent that the hotel industry as a whole has some way to go if it is to play a leading role in contributing to the SDGs. There could be a sharper focus on the SDGs themselves, with a more comprehensive approach to drawing up priorities for the SDGs, whilst addressing the issues of performance measurement in a more systematic manner. Cross-industry bodies such as the ITP and UNWTO also have a key role to play in instigating and implementing industry initiatives in support of the SDGs.

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