

Issue Paper



SDGs' Impact on Sectors

EU CBAM and International Trade Law: Legal Implications for Taiwan

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Advancement of Sustainable Travel in APEC Economies- Ingrid Wang, Assistant Research Fellow, Department of International Affairs, Taiwan Institute of Economic Research



Issue Paper

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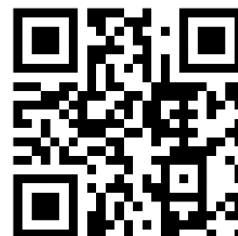
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1. Introduction

In this issue of Issue Paper, we bring together two timely and deeply interconnected discussions that reflect both the challenges and opportunities facing the international community today. The first article, EU CBAM and International Trade Law: Legal Implications for Taiwan, examines the European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) through the lens of international trade law. By exploring its potential compatibility—or conflict—with the World Trade Organization’s principles, particularly Most-Favored-Nation and National Treatment obligations, the article sheds light on the broader implications for economies like Taiwan that are navigating the intersection of climate governance and global trade. It argues that while the EU aims to prevent carbon leakage and reinforce climate ambition, the CBAM raises critical legal and systemic questions that must be addressed to maintain a rules-based international order.

The second article, Advancement of Sustainable Travel in APEC Economies, shifts the focus to another crucial dimension of sustainability: tourism. Highlighting initiatives in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan, the article demonstrates how member economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) are advancing sustainable and regenerative tourism models. These efforts emphasize reducing environmental harm, enhancing digital innovation, and preserving cultural and natural heritage while ensuring inclusivity and resilience. Together, these case studies illustrate the region’s determination to align tourism growth with long-term ecological and societal well-being.

Together, these two contributions reflect the multifaceted nature of sustainability in today’s globalized world. They remind us that the pursuit of economic competitiveness, environmental stewardship, and legal certainty is not confined to one domain but requires integrated, cross-border solutions.



3-1. EU CBAM and International Trade Law: Legal Implications for Taiwan

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In recent years, Taiwan has implemented numerous climate measures, in particular carbon pricing mechanism, under the looming pressure of the EU CBAM. Nevertheless, as the representative of The Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu (WTO) rightly put it, ‘It is equally important that the CBAM is effective in achieving the goal of preventing carbon leakage and that the related measures are consistent with WTO rules. Ensuring the compliance of a CBAM with the WTO rules and preventing the measures from being discriminatory or becoming a disguised restriction on international trade are the fundamental obligations of any WTO Member’ (WTO Trade Concern Database, 2024). Since the CBAM bases the administrative cost and burden on factors such as carbon emissions of imported goods and the existence of carbon pricing mechanisms, it may result in differential treatment – at least seemingly so.

This article plans to discuss legal issues concerning the CBAM, the potential violation against the 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in specific. The following sections shall examine whether the implementation of the CBAM complies with respective GATT provisions’ requirements in detail.

A. Most-Favored-Nation (MFN)

Article 1 of GATT establishes the Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) Treatment principle, which prohibits signatory economies from giving differential treatment to products exported to or imported



from different economies. In other words, WTO members are required to automatically grant to products from or destined for any WTO member the same trade advantages they have already granted to similar products from other countries, regardless of whether those countries are WTO members¹.

Under the framework of the CBAM, the EU will either charge or exempt individual countries from purchasing CBAM certificates. It is debatable whether this differential treatment complies with the Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) principle. This depends on whether the differential treatment is based on the country of origin or the characteristics of the product itself. In assessing whether differential treatment violates Articles 1 (MFN) and Articles 3 (National Treatment) of GATT, the key determinant lies in the comparison of 'like products'. Traditionally, GATT interprets 'like products' by considering factors such as tariff classifications, physical characteristics, the final usage of the product, consumer preferences and habits. Therefore, it remains controversial that standards such as carbon footprints related to 'processes and production methods' (PPMs) can be used to determine whether products are alike. In addition, if the CBAM grants preferential treatment based on whether individual countries have implemented emission reduction measures equivalent to those of the EU, or have linked their domestic emissions trading systems to that of the EU, rather than on the inherent characteristics of the product itself, this differential treatment could potentially violate the obligation to provide unconditional advantages to other contracting parties.

However, some argue that in the application of the CBAM, while the EU will indeed evaluate the climate actions of other WTO member states to determine the number of certificates required, which results in differential treatment among members (i.e., similar to granting advantages), the EU may contend that it is applying the 'same' standards to all countries, without giving advantages to any particular country's products².

B. National Treatment (MFN)

Article 3 of GATT establishes the National Treatment principle, which requires signatory economies not to impose taxes or fees on imported products for the purpose of protecting domestic

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1. Alonso Gayon, "The EU's CBAM, Complying with the CBDR Principle Could Also Mean Compliance with WTO Law", p.277, 2023.
 2. Sejdiu, "DECARBONIZING THE WORLD: CAN THE EU CBAM PROVIDE THE INCENTIVE WE NEED?", p.243-244, 2023



products. Obtaining and rendering carbon allowances to cover a company's emissions is considered an obligation of the operator under the EU CBAM and ETS. The legal characterization of this obligation will affect how GATT's National Treatment provisions are examined. Specifically, if this legal requirement is characterized as part of the domestic regulations under Article 3.4 of GATT, the standard for determining a violation of the National Treatment principle would be more flexible than if they are characterized as internal taxes under Article 3.2. To characterize carbon allowances as 'domestic regulations' may leave more room for legal interpretation, since WTO rulings have indicated that, in this case, differentiated treatment does not always imply discrimination. That said, regardless of how carbon allowances are ultimately characterized, they must still comply with GATT's National Treatment obligations.

Some argue that carbon allowances should fall under Article 3.2 as internal taxes. As even if they are not characterized as 'direct or indirect internal taxes', they could still be regarded as 'other internal charges of any kind' under the latter part of the provision. In accordance with past WTO dispute cases, 'other internal charges' can refer to 'pecuniary burden' or 'liability to pay money laid on a person'. However, others argue that the imposing of obligation to submit carbon allowances should be characterized as domestic regulations under Article 3.4, as they are similar to permits created and regulated by the state, and are more akin to a market regulatory measure rather than a tax instrument.

Since the CBAM has not yet begun the actual collection of certificates, the most controversial issue at this stage is the free allocation measures under the existing EU ETS. If the CBAM requires importers to purchase CBAM certificates, but free allowances remain to be issued to producers within the EU, this could result in overprotection for EU products, thereby violating the National Treatment principle³. To avoid such a violation, the EU must ensure that free allowances are not granted to domestic producers when the CBAM comes into force⁴. According to the current CBAM regulations, free allowances under the ETS will be gradually phased out once the CBAM is implemented.

In sum, it is granted that as long as the EU ensures that no higher charges are imposed on imported products compared to similar domestic products, it would not constitute discrimination against the

3. Fossali, "THE PERFECT CLIMATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE COORDINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM THROUGH GATT ARTICLES XX AND XXI", pp.645-646, 2023.

4. Sejdiu, "DECARBONIZING THE WORLD: CAN THE EU CBAM PROVIDE THE INCENTIVE WE NEED?", p.246-247, 2023.



country of origin, nor would it violate the Most-Favoured-Nation principle⁵.

C. Exemptions and Exceptions

If non-EU countries insist that the potential violation of the CBAM against the aforementioned GATT provisions, the EU may still have an opportunity to defend itself under Article 20 of GATT by resorting to exemptions and exceptions. However, the application of this article requires meeting two elements: (1) the measure must fall under one of the exceptions listed in Article 20, and (2) it must satisfy the requirements of the chapeau (general principles) of Article 20, which states that the measures are not applied in a manner which would constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination between countries where the same conditions prevail, or a disguised restriction on international trade. The order of the test cannot be reversed, because the meaning of the chapeau (general principles) is rather vague, thus switching the order would make the assessment difficult, if not impossible⁶. The EU's most plausible justifications for the CBAM under Article 20 would be (b) necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health, and (g) the conservation of

exhaustible natural resources. While Article 20 provides a potential path forward, only two cases in the past have successfully invoked Article 20, and both were based on Subparagraph (g). Given that the small number of precedents and uncertainty⁷, it will be challenging for the EU to prove that the CBAM qualifies for an exception under this article⁸.

(A) (b) necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health

To apply this provision, two tests must be met. First, it must be determined whether the policy in question aligns with the objectives of the provision, and second, the policy must pass the necessity test. The first test involves assessing whether the CBAM is aimed at protecting human, animal, or plant life or health. In previous cases, the Appellate Body has indicated that the contribution of a policy to its

5. Fossali, "THE PERFECT CLIMATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE COORDINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM THROUGH GATT ARTICLES XX AND XXI", p.648, 2023.

6. Englisch & Falcao, „EU Tax Law and Policy in the Financial Crisis: Recent Developments”, p.10937, 2021b.

7. Fossali, "THE PERFECT CLIMATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE COORDINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM THROUGH GATT ARTICLES XX AND XXI", p.650, 2023.

8. Sejdiu, "DECARBONIZING THE WORLD: CAN THE EU CBAM PROVIDE THE INCENTIVE WE NEED?", p.248, 2023.



or health. In previous cases, the Appellate Body has indicated that the contribution of a policy to its objective can be validated over time, especially in the context of measures taken to mitigate global warming and climate change⁹. Therefore, the CBAM may have a chance to argue its case under this provision. However, given the historically low success rate of such defenses, some scholars suggest that the EU should focus on demonstrating the real relationship between the objectives pursued and the measures taken. Although the CBAM may have other considerations, such as creating a level playing field, the EU's defense should emphasize the protection of human, animal, and plant life or health to strengthen its argument¹⁰.

After confirming the objective, the necessity test must be conducted. This involves weighing the importance of the common interest or value it pursues, the contribution of the specific measure to the policy objective. It also includes assessing the impact of the measure on international trade and considering if there are alternative measures that are more in line with WTO rules or impose fewer restrictions on trade¹¹. Some scholars hold that the EU may not pass the necessity test because a 'carbon tax' could be considered an alternative measure that achieves the same level of protection¹². In this case, the EU would need to explain why a carbon tax is not as equally effective and why the CBAM is the least trade-restrictive option.

(B) (g) the conservation of exhaustible natural resources

This provision also requires two tests. The first part involves determining whether the measure in question is related to the conservation of exhaustible natural resources. In past cases, WTO panels have recognized that clean air qualifies as an exhaustible natural resource, as excessive human emissions of greenhouse gases disrupt the balance of the atmosphere. Since the CBAM is directly related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the cost of emissions for businesses and reducing carbon leakage, it can be argued that the conservation of exhaustible natural resources is the primary objective of the CBAM¹³.

9. Fossali, "THE PERFECT CLIMATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE COORDINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM THROUGH GATT ARTICLES XX AND XXI", p.651, 2023.

10. Fossali, "THE PERFECT CLIMATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE COORDINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM THROUGH GATT ARTICLES XX AND XXI", p.652, 2023.

11. Sejdiu, "DECARBONIZING THE WORLD: CAN THE EU CBAM PROVIDE THE INCENTIVE WE NEED?", p.247, 2023.

12. Sejdiu, "DECARBONIZING THE WORLD: CAN THE EU CBAM PROVIDE THE INCENTIVE WE NEED?", p.247, 2023.

13. Shih, "1/17 Taiwan CBAM Seminar Minutes?", p.235, 2023.



The second part of this provision involves a fairness test. The requirement that ‘such measures are made effective in conjunction with restrictions on domestic production or consumption’ does not mean that domestic and imported products must receive identical treatment, but rather that the measures must operate jointly on both domestic and imported goods¹⁴. In the case of the CBAM, it is argued that there are already relevant regulations in place for domestic producers, namely the EU ETS, and that the CBAM is designed to complement these domestic measures. Therefore, it could pass the fairness test¹⁵. However, some scholars have raised concerns that if the ETS continues to grant free allowances to domestic sectors, this could prevent the measure from satisfying the fairness requirement of this provision¹⁶.

(C) the chapeau (general principles) of Article 20

As previously mentioned, in addition to meeting the specific exceptions under Article 20, the measure must also comply with the general requirements of the Article 20 chapeau, which states that it must not result in ‘constituting a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination between countries where the same conditions prevail, or a disguised restriction on international trade’. To evaluate whether a measure constitutes arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination, three elements must be considered: (1) The application of the measure must result in discrimination; (2) The discrimination must be arbitrary or unjustifiable in nature; (3) The discrimination must occur between countries under similar conditions¹⁷. Past cases have shown that whether bilateral or multilateral international consultations have been conducted is a factor in determining whether the discrimination is arbitrary or unjustifiable. It is not necessary to reach a formal international agreement; it suffices to demonstrate that there has been a good faith effort to consult with other countries¹⁸. Therefore, whether the EU has sufficiently consulted with its trade partners before implementing the CBAM will be a key factor

14. Fossali, “THE PERFECT CLIMATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE COORDINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM THROUGH GATT ARTICLES XX AND XXI”, p.653-654, 2023.

15. Mehling et al., “Designing a Border Carbon Adjustment in Europe: Insights from a Stakeholder Dialogue”, p.467, 2019.

16. Englisch & Falcao, “EU Tax Law and Policy in the Financial Crisis: Recent Developments”, p.10941, 2021a.

17. Shih, “1/17 Taiwan CBAM Seminar Minutes”, p.36, 2023.

18. Shih, “1/17 Taiwan CBAM Seminar Minutes”, p.36, 2023.



in this assessment¹⁹. Additionally, the policy's degree of transparency, predictability, and adherence to due process will also be important in determining whether the measure constitutes arbitrary discrimination²⁰.

Regarding the latter part of the chapeau, which addresses ‘disguised restrictions on international trade’, several criteria based on past cases should be taken into account, including whether the measure has been publicly announced and whether it constitutes arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination²¹. By providing allowance only for carbon prices paid in third countries to offset CBAM obligations, some scholars argue that CBAM effectively forces other countries to adopt policies similar to the EU’s ETS, without considering whether such regulations are appropriate for the specific conditions of the exporting country. This could potentially result in arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination²² (Sato, 2022, p.394). However, the EU might defend itself by emphasizing that the CBAM assesses the emissions of specific products rather than the overall emissions levels of the exporting country. Therefore, the EU could hold that CBAM does not impose strict requirements on other WTO members to adopt similar policies, thus avoiding accusations of forcing its standards on others to hinder international trade²³ (Fossali, 2023, p.656).

In conclusion, before aligning with the EU CBAM, it is essential to examine its legality and legitimacy and ascertain its compliance with rule-based international legal order, specifically the international trade law. While the EU is proposing Omnibus Simplification Package at present, it is particularly about time for Taiwan to take an even closer look at the EU CBAM and think through Taiwan’s own role and target in global climate governance presuming a world order without the EU CBAM.

19. Fossali, “THE PERFECT CLIMATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE COORDINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM THROUGH GATT ARTICLES XX AND XXI”, p.655, 2023.

20. Shih, “1/17 Taiwan CBAM Seminar Minutes”, p.36, 2023.

21. Shih, “1/17 Taiwan CBAM Seminar Minutes”, p.36, 2023.

22. Sato, “EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism: Will It Achieve Its Objective(s)?”, p.394, 2022.

23. Fossali, “THE PERFECT CLIMATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE COORDINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EU CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM THROUGH GATT ARTICLES XX AND XXI”, p.656, 2023.



3-2. Advancement of Sustainable Travel in APEC Economies

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Introduction: The APEC Tourism Working Group

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Tourism Working Group (TWG) was established in 1991, just two years after APEC's founding by Australia. From the outset, member economies recognized tourism's potential to fuel economic growth, deepen cultural exchange, and strengthen regional cooperation. This led to strong support for a permanent forum dedicated to tourism-related issues.

Today, the TWG remains an active platform where tourism officials from across the region share knowledge, exchange perspectives, and work together on policies and initiatives that drive growth through travel and tourism.

Under its current multi-year Strategic Plan, the TWG has identified four priority areas: ¹

- Digital transformation
- Human capital development
- Travel facilitation and competitiveness
- Sustainable tourism and economic growth

In 2024, APEC Tourism Ministers met in Urubamba, Peru, where they reaffirmed their commitment to building a tourism sector that is more adaptive, sustainable, and inclusive. Central to

1. APEC Tourism Working Group, APEC, July 2025.



this vision is the concept of regenerative tourism, an approach that not only minimizes environmental harm but actively restores and enriches local communities and ecosystems. The annex to the Joint Tourism Ministerial Meeting Statement in 2022 emphasizes that tourism should be regenerative, inclusive, and resilient, contributing to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, reducing carbon emissions, and promoting the economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being of the region.²

This article explores how three APEC economies, Taiwan (referred to as “Chinese Taipei” in APEC), South Korea and Japan, are advancing sustainable tourism, with the aim of highlighting opportunities for shared learning and mutual growth across the region.

Case Studies by Economy

A. Taiwan

In 2023, Taiwan has established the Tourism Administration, under the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC), and adopted a “Sustainable × Digital” transformation model, designed to position Taiwan on the global stage as Brand Taiwan, Charming Taiwan, and Smart Taiwan.³ This model aligns closely with the APEC TWG’s priority areas of digital transformation and sustainable tourism by embedding eco-friendly practices into tourism planning while leveraging advanced technologies to enhance visitor experiences.

By supporting small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector, such as local tour operators, homestay providers, cultural experience hosts, and specialty retailers, in adopting digital tools, implementing data-driven destination management, and promoting low-carbon travel initiatives, Taiwan is enhancing its international competitiveness while safeguarding its cultural heritage and natural ecosystems.

This integration of sustainability and digital innovation reflects the principles of regenerative tourism, aiming to strengthen the sector’s resilience and adaptability to evolving environmental, social, and market conditions in the Asia-Pacific region.

Green Mark Hotel Certification Program



2. Policy Recommendations for Tourism of the Future: Regenerative Tourism, APEC, August 2022.

3. “Sustainable × Digital”: A Dual-Axis Transformation to Showcase Taiwan to the World, Tourism Bureau, Republic of China (Taiwan), 2023.



Among the key measures supporting this vision is Taiwan's Green Mark Hotel Certification Program, which encourages accommodation providers to adopt environmentally responsible practices. Complementing this, the Tourism Administration has implemented the Guidelines for Subsidies to Enhance the Quality of Accommodation Services, first introduced in 2005 and updated in 2024,⁴ to provide financial support to eligible hotels pursuing relevant domestic or international certifications, accreditations, or labels in sustainability, energy conservation and carbon reduction, environmental protection, and ecofriendly hospitality.

Also, launched in 2008, the Green Mark Hotel Certification Program incentivizes hotel operators to adopt environmentally friendly measures such as energy conservation, water saving, waste sorting, and recycling.⁵ The program uses a tiered system, gold, silver, and bronze levels, based on the achievement rate of environmental performance indicators. While there is still room to increase the number of hotels obtaining international sustainability certifications,⁶ Taiwan's commitment to transforming its tourism sector toward a more sustainable future is clear and irreversible.

Single-Use Item Restrictions in Hotels

Starting in 2025, Taiwan enacted a new regulation restricting the provision of single-use items in hotels. Under this policy, guests may obtain restricted items, such as toiletries and shower accessories, only upon request at the hotel counter, either free of charge or for a fee.⁷ This measure is intended not only to reduce disposable waste but also to promote more sustainable consumption habits among travelers, thereby reinforcing Taiwan's broader environmental goals.

B. South Korea

South Korea has been committed to promoting tourism initiatives that make travel more convenient and accessible for visitors, while also encouraging the use of sustainable and eco-friendly transportation options.

4. Taiwan Offers Subsidies for Hotels Achieving Sustainability Certifications: Up to 80% Fee Reimbursement, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, December 2024.

5. Green Mark Hotels, SGS Taiwan, 2025.

6. Ministry plans green hotel certification, Taipei Times, March 2025.

7. Taiwan to restrict single-use toiletries in hotels by 2025, Taiwan News, October 2024.



Climate Card Tourist Pass

In July 2024, the city of Seoul introduced the Climate Card Tourist Pass, designed specifically for international travelers and short-stay Korean visitors.⁸ This eco-friendly pass offers unlimited access to the city's extensive public transportation network, including buses, subways, and the Ttareungi (Seoul public bike-sharing system), for a set period..

By encouraging the use of sustainable modes of travel, the Climate Card not only reduces reliance on private vehicles but also helps lower greenhouse gas emissions. This is particularly important for travelers who require frequent or long-distance travel within the city, as transportation is one of the major contributors to tourism-related carbon emissions.

Moreover, the initiative aligns with Seoul's broader strategy to promote low-carbon urban mobility, complementing other measures such as expanding electric bus fleets and creating pedestrian-friendly zones. In doing so, the Climate Card serves as both a practical travel solution and a tangible example of how tourism can be harmonized with environmental sustainability.

Jeju Promise Initiative

Jeju Island is another key location in South Korea for advancing sustainable goals, including promoting sustainable tourism, with a flagship strategy aimed at achieving zero plastic waste by 2040.⁹

- A deposit system for single-use cups
- Expanded use of reusable delivery containers
- Declaration of “Clean Udo” plastic-free zone
- Launch of the Jeju Plogging mobile app
- Designation of an ecological corporation to protect southern finless porpoises

Complementing these environmental efforts, the “Jeju Promise” Initiative, launched in 2024, outlines three core pledges: the Promise of Preservation, the Promise of Coexistence, and the Promise of Respect. These pledges reaffirm the island's commitment to conserving and protecting its natural environment, harmoniously cultivating and showcasing its beauty, and upholding and safeguarding its unique cultural heritage.

8. Seoul Launches ‘Climate Card Tourist Pass’ With 1, 2, 3, and 5-day Options Starting in July, Seoul Metropolitan Government, May 2024.

9. From Promise to Action: Jeju's 2040 Vision for Zero Plastic, Jeju Business Agency, July 2025.



Tourists, residents, and businesses are encouraged to participate in the initiative and share their actions online, helping to inspire more people to contribute to Jeju Island's sustainable goals. Through these collective efforts, Jeju aims to set a new benchmark for sustainable tourism while ensuring the preservation of its environment.

C. Japan

Japan has become one of the most visited tourist destinations following the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this surge in tourism has resulted in overtourism, creating challenges for environmental sustainability and the well-being of local communities.

The measures implemented in Japan primarily focus on controlling the number of tourists and striking a balance between accommodating visitors and supporting the livelihoods of local businesses.

Kyoto Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism

The Kyoto Guidelines set out core values and directions for tourism in Kyoto, aiming to achieve sustainable tourism in collaboration with workers, residents, and visitors. Tourists are encouraged to:¹⁰

- Contribute to the local culture and community while promoting harmony between residential life and tourism
- Preserve the natural environment and scenic landscape
- Engage in mutual cultural appreciation
- Cooperate with established rules for what to do in an emergency

Nonetheless, Kyoto is renowned for its historical heritage and traditional Japanese culture. However, the rise of overtourism has brought with it several challenges, including excessive waste generation, traffic congestion, and disturbances to geisha. Such disturbances include chasing geisha down the street, touching their kimono, and taking photographs without consent.

In response, Kyoto has implemented measures to promote lesser-known areas, aiming to alleviate pressure on iconic sites such as Gion and Kinkaku-ji, which frequently suffer from severe overcrowding.

10. Sustainable Tourism in Kyoto, City of Kyoto and Kyoto City Tourism Association, 2025.



Beginning in April 2024, tourists have been banned from entering Gion’s narrow alleys due to increasing incidents of harassment toward geisha. This measure not only helps preserve Kyoto’s cultural heritage but also enhances the quality of life for local residents while fostering a more respectful environment for both cultural practitioners and visitors seeking authentic cultural experiences.

Japan Tourism Agency “Guidelines for travelers”

Beyond Kyoto, the Japan Tourism Agency has issued guidelines for international visitors to follow when traveling in the country.¹¹ These guidelines emphasize not only respecting the local environment but also adhering to proper etiquette.

Travelers are advised to dispose of waste in designated trash bins where available, or carry it with them until proper disposal is possible. Cans, glass, and plastic bottles should be separated and placed in the appropriate recycling bins. Visitors are also encouraged to support local economies by purchasing regional handicrafts and meals made with locally sourced ingredients. Such practices not only sustain the destination’s culture and traditions but also contribute to its long-term environmental and economic sustainability.

Conclusion

The experiences of Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan demonstrate how APEC economies are translating the Tourism Working Group’s Strategic Plan into practical, impactful initiatives. From Taiwan’s promotion of “Sustainable × Digital” transformation, to South Korea’s initiatives for eco-friendly transportation and zero-plastic goals, to Japan’s strategies for mitigating overtourism and preserving cultural heritage, these examples illustrate the shared commitment to advancing regenerative, inclusive, and resilient tourism.

By aligning national policies with the TWG’s priorities, digital transformation, human capital development, travel facilitation and competitiveness, and sustainable tourism and economic growth, member economies can collectively enhance the Asia-Pacific’s position as a model for responsible tourism development. Strengthening cross-economy collaboration, sharing best practices, and fostering innovation will be essential to ensuring that tourism in the region not only thrives economically but also enriches communities, protects the environment, and preserves cultural legacies for generations to come.

11. Promoting sustainable tourism, Japan Tourism Agency, 2025.



3. Conclusion

The articles featured in this issue underscore the complex yet essential balance between environmental responsibility, legal integrity, and economic growth. The discussion of the EU CBAM demonstrates how climate policy, when translated into trade measures, generates far-reaching legal debates. For Taiwan, as for many economies, the stakes are high: engaging proactively in global climate governance while safeguarding its trade interests requires careful legal and policy calibration. This case illustrates that the transition toward low-carbon economies cannot occur in isolation, but must be firmly embedded in international legal frameworks to ensure fairness and predictability.

Similarly, the exploration of sustainable tourism in APEC economies highlights how sustainability is not solely a matter of legal compliance, but also of innovation, culture, and community engagement. The examples from Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan reveal how tourism policies, when designed around regenerative principles, can generate both economic vitality and ecological resilience. By tackling issues from overtourism to single-use plastics, these economies are showing pathways toward a tourism sector that enriches societies while protecting shared natural and cultural assets.

Together, these perspectives demonstrate that sustainability is not a static goal but a dynamic process—one that requires international cooperation, legal clarity, and societal participation. Whether in the domain of trade or tourism, progress will depend on the willingness of economies to integrate diverse priorities, respect shared rules, and innovate in response to emerging challenges. As the global community advances toward a more sustainable future, the insights in this issue affirm the need for both vigilance and vision in shaping policies that are just, inclusive, and enduring.



Reader Survey

