The annual WTTC Global Summit 2018 took place in Buenos Aires last month, bringing together Heads of Government, CEOs and Tourism Policymakers to debate the biggest challenges for our industry.

We heard the likes of H.E. Mauricio Macri, President of Argentina; Fritz Joussen, CEO of TUI; H.E. Derek Hanekom, South African Minister of Tourism; and Jose Maria Aznar, former Prime Minister of Spain among many others discussing topics as diverse as the role of biometrics in travel security, combating illegal trade in wildlife and promoting sustainable growth.

There were many takeaways, but here are eight that we think are particularly valuable:

1. **It plans to increase international tourist arrivals by 50% and domestic tourism trips by over 30% in just four years.** This should increase jobs in the tourism sector by 300,000. Relaxed visa regulations, deregulation of the skies, investment in infrastructure and a focus on nature tourism are some of the pillars of this plan.

2. **It’s responsible for about 5% of global CO2 emissions. Businesses that adapt now, working to limit water use and waste, making efficiencies in supply chains, using electric vehicles, finding alternatives to plastic and offsetting carbon emissions will be the winners of the future.** In a first for the sector a new Common Agenda on Climate Change was agreed between WTTC and UN Climate Change.

3. **You can’t just bolt digital on to a business.** There needs to be a change in culture that’s centred on: absolute simplicity of message, relentless focus on the customer and empowering employees to do their jobs better.

4. **Whilst there have been notable successes, poaching networks have gained in sophistication.** It’s on an industrial scale now and 7000 species are victims. The WTTC Buenos Aires Declaration on Travel & Tourism and Illegal Wildlife Trade set out specific actions that the sector can take to address this challenge.

5. **Producing travel documentation will soon be a thing of the past in many places as facial recognition technology is already being widely tested in several markets, particularly the USA.** It’s actually the adoption of agreed standards for security that’s holding things up. Only 30% of states have implemented them.

6. **Governments that take the sector seriously quickly see the value it can add.** Costa Rica is a great example, but we see this replicated across the globe. 80% of Costa Rica’s GDP from tourism benefits the lowest quintile and 60% of the jobs created are for women.

7. **Local people need to be fully engaged for success.** They have a crucial role to play in anti-poaching work, avoiding overcrowding and improving visitor experience. Smart countries are involving local people in long term tourism planning and ensuring they see the benefits by ploughing back some of the profits into community projects.

8. **Having developed processes to ensure the right help gets to the right people is of course crucial.** But the knock-on effects from a crisis can be more devastating than the event itself, with extended periods of economic stagnation after a hurricane of health crisis is over. How both mainstream and social media portray the situation right from the word go can help or hinder the speed of recovery. Managing the message is thus extremely important.