

Global tourism rebounds to 80pc of pre-pandemic levels : UNWTO

-A Monitor Report

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Madrid : The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) announced in a recent report that global tourism, in terms of tourist arrival numbers, has rebounded to 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of 2023.

The surge can be seen in the 235 million tourists who have travelled internationally, more than doubling 2022's first-quarter figures, the UN agency said.

According to UNWTO, regionally, the Middle East leads in tourism recovery, surpassing 2019 arrivals by 15 per cent. While Europe, Africa, and the Americas followed, recovering to 90 per cent, 88 per cent, and 85 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, respectively. The Asia-Pacific region is currently at 54 per cent and anticipate swift acceleration, spurred by

China's reopening as a destination.

In 2022, international tourism receipts hit the USD 1 trillion mark, a 50 per cent growth from 2021.

By region, Europe led the rebound with nearly USD 550 billion in tourism receipts in 2022. Africa recovered to 75 per cent of its pre-pandemic receipts, while the Middle East reached 70 per cent, the Americas to 68, and Asia to 28 per cent.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili pointed out the tourism industry's "unique ability" to bounce back, but also emphasised the need for vigilance against challenges including geopolitical instability, staffing shortages, and cost-of-living crises.

"The start of the year has shown again tourism's unique ability to bounce back. In many places, we are close to or even above pre-pandemic levels of arrivals. However, we must remain alert..." said Pololikashvili, who also stressed that the industry must uphold its responsibilities toward climate action and inclusive development.

Despite the hurdles, the UNWTO continued to project a recovery of 80 per cent to 95 per cent of pre-pandemic international arrivals for the entirety of 2023. The latest UNWTO Confidence Index suggests a stronger peak season in the May to August period for the Northern Hemisphere, bolstering optimism for global tourism recovery.