

Tourism can play major role in global pandemic recovery

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Geneva : A meeting of tourism specialists, held on April 25-29 in Geneva, Switzerland, has laid out policy recommendations that could help the tourism sector play a major role in the global recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The technical meeting, organised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), stressed the importance of policies and measures that focus on tourism recovery that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient.

Priorities should include support for a just transition towards formality in the tourism sector, the promotion of decent jobs and sustainable enterprises, measures to ensure adequate protection for all workers, and improving the sector's preparedness for future crises.

Their conclusions also underscored the importance of implementing the ILO's Guidelines on decent work and socially responsible tourism and supporting cooperation with relevant multilateral organisations - including the OECD, UNDP, UNEP, UNWTO and WHO - and regional organisations, to promote coherent policies.

The ILO technical meeting on Covid-19 and sustainable recovery in the tourism sector, brought together representatives from 86 governments, 12 employers, 22 workers, as well as 10 representatives from international governmental and non-

governmental organisations, to discuss a sustainable and resilient recovery and a just transition to a sustainable future of work in tourism.

The tourism sector is a major driver of economic growth, enterprise development and job creation, particularly for women, youth, migrant workers and local communities. Prior to the Covid-19 crisis it accounted for one in 10 jobs worldwide and about 10 per cent of global GDP. The sector employs a high share of women and youth. In 2019, women accounted for more than 50 per cent of workers in the sector, and the majority of all workers in tourism were aged under 35.

Tourism was one of the industries hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequences were felt particularly strongly in the informal parts of the sector, where decent work deficits are also most pronounced. Informal or casual employment frequently involves women, young people, indigenous and tribal peoples, migrant workers and local communities, who are consequently disproportionately affected.

"The impact of the pandemic on enterprises, especially MSMEs [Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises], is unprecedented," said Ignacio Eduardo Capurro, Group Vice-Chairperson, Employers.

"Ensuring business continuity and devising policies to foster sustainable enterprise development is of the utmost importance for the recovery of the sector. Moreover, promoting skills development and the transition to the formal economy are essential to enhance productivity in the context of the future of work of the sector."

"The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated decent work deficits in the tourism sector, many of which had existed before its outbreak," said Kerstin Howald, Group Vice-Chairperson, Workers.

"Social dialogue, based on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, is key to improve working conditions, wages, occupational health and safety, social protection, gender equality and technical vocational education and training, and for the just transition to an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future of work, as decent work is the precondition to overcome the labour shortages in tourism."

"Policies that promote an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and sustainable tourism enterprises, invest in the development of a skilled tourism workforce and facilitate the transition from the informal to the formal economy are key to a human-centred, inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery," said Josêphine Andriamamon-jiarison, Chair-person of the meeting.

The conclusions and recommendations adopted at the meeting are intended to assist governments, employers and workers to harness the fullest potential of the tourism sector to support a human-centered inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery and a just transition to a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient future of work in tourism.