

## Tourism transformed at UNWTO ministers' summit at WTM 2022

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London : "Our job is to create jobs," UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili told tourism sector leaders as education, sustainability, and governance took centre stage at the Ministers' Summit at the World Travel Market in London from November 7-9.

This consolidated platform for public and private sector leaders addresses tourism's most pressing issues and sets the agenda for the years ahead.

Held around the theme of 'Rethinking Tourism', the 16th Summit gathered Ministers and high-level delegates from 19 countries, alongside business leaders. Reflecting the heightened relevance of tourism for cross-cutting economic and social wellbeing, this year's edition was the most successful to date.

Opening the event, Secretary-General Pololikashvili emphasised the unique opportunity to transform the sector. However, with UNWTO data showing that global tourism now at around 70 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, "the window of opportunity will not stay open forever. We need to rethink tourism: as a provider of jobs, an economic pillar, and, against the backdrop of COP27, as a solution to the climate emergency".

Education, jobs key to tourism's future

Presenting an overview of UNWTO's work leading the transformation of tourism, Secretary-General Pololikashvili focused on investing in sustainable infrastructure and in people, most notably through quality education and providing decent jobs.

Echoing UNWTO's position, Juliette Losardo, Exhibition Director at World Travel Markets, noted that "a post-pandemic world has revealed exciting opportunities, and given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reconsider tourism and ask ourselves how we can rebuild and better prepare for the future". Julia Simpson, President and CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), which co-organizes the Summit with UNWTO, emphasised the "talent, speed and capital" of the private sector.

Global expertise for common challenges

The roundtable brought together Ministers of Tourism from every global region. Each provided unique insights from their own countries.

Opening, Ahmed Al-Khateeb, Minister of Tourism for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stressed putting "sustainability above everything", also noting his country's focus on innovation and youth.

Highlighting the importance of diversifying national tourism sectors, including through domestic and rural tourism, and creating new products were Abdulla Mausoom, Minister of Tourism for the Maldives, the Minister for Portugal, Rita Marques, and the Minister for Egypt, Ahmed Issa.

Picking up on the theme of Rethinking Tourism, the Minister of Tourism for Croatia

Nikolina Brnjac, noted that this would require an "evolution" towards measuring success by greater sustainability".

Meanwhile, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism for Mauritius Steven Obeegadoo, emphasised its ability to promote peace, adding "We need to look beyond tourism to rebuild tourism."

Also contributing to discussions were the Ministers from Bahrain, Costa Rica Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

Representing tourism's vast and broad private sector, Expedia and the Radisson Hotel Group outlined their proactive work achieving greater sustainability, as well as highlighting the sector's ability to provide decent jobs and lifelong career progression for people everywhere.

Tourism's unprecedented political relevance

While the Summit promoted diversity of thought, background and experiences, a focus on tourism's unique power as a driver of sustainability and as a promoter of peace and understanding proved a common theme. High-level participants emphasised that now is the time for the tourism sector to focus more on cooperation rather than competition. Ministers also acknowledged UNWTO Secretary-General Pololikashvili's call for tourism to be mainstreamed within the political agenda and for greater collaboration between ministries of tourism and those of economy, business and environment.