

UNWTO urges members to make tourism stronger, ready for future

A Monitor Report

Date: 01 January, 2022



Madrid : This has been another challenging year for our societies, our economies and tourism. Many millions of jobs and businesses remain in peril, at the mercy of an evolving crisis and of the actions of governments. However, we are by no means in the same place we were when the pandemic was declared in March 2020. In fact, we have succeeded in laying the foundations to restart tourism around the pillars of sustainability, innovation, people and investing for a resilient future.

This is what the United Nations World Tourism Organisation Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said in a press release, urging all member states to bring collaborative efforts to make tourism stronger and ready for the future.

Working together

Over the past year, much progress has been made in rolling out vaccinations and in both detecting and treating Covid-19. We have also seen significant progress made in finding the right balance between keeping people safe and keeping the vital lifeline of tourism intact, as illustrated by UNWTO's effective collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) since the very start of the pandemic, said Pololikashvili.

Ensuring harmonised travel protocols has been our message since day one. They are at the heart of tourism's restart in many parts of the world, claimed the

Secretary General.

Expanding on UNWTO's mandate

UNWTO's global innovation ecosystem is now made up of over 12,000 start-ups from 160 countries, with USD 83 million mobilised and 300 corporate partners currently working on new tourism technologies, the Secretary General mentioned, adding, their education programmes are reaching unprecedented numbers of people, welcoming more than 20,000 students from 100 countries in just 18 months.

UNWTO promotes lifelong learning thanks to partnerships with the world's top five institutions in tourism and hospitality. Together, IE university, Les Riches, Glion Institute, Ecole du Casse and the Swiss Education Group offer 19 online courses in Spanish, English and Arabic - a true 'online university of universities', Pololikashvili outlined.

Also, through partnership with the Financial Times, we have produced the first UNWTO tourism investment guidelines, which we are now scaling up to create guidelines for doing tourism businesses by country, he claimed.

Restarting tourism is unthinkable without green investments. We are collaborating with institutions such as the World Bank's International Finance Corporation and the Inter-American Development Bank. To date, more than 200 investors are part of UNWTO's global investment network advancing critical work such as supporting hotel chains from 50 countries to become more sustainable, mentioned the Secretary General.

For people and planet

Tourism is ready to do the hard work and live up to its responsibilities to people and planet, as demonstrated by the huge interest we have received in the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, launched at the UN Climate Summit COP26.

We are receiving a growing number of commitments to halve emissions by 2030 and to reach NetZero by 2050 at the latest, with Member countries, individual destinations, global companies and local players as well as media outlets, hundreds are on board, and counting.

And for people, we are making sure the benefits tourism offers are enjoyed as widely and fairly as possible. That includes establishing the sector as a driver of rural development, as celebrated through the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO initiative.

Launched to great enthusiasm this year, 44 villages from 32 countries were granted the recognition during our recent General Assembly, for showing a commitment to tourism development in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mainstreaming tourism

Like never before, the pandemic has made clear tourism's relevance to our economies and societies. Tourism is now part of the global conversation and at the heart of both national and international recovery action plans.

And support for UNWTO has never been louder or more visible. Over the past 12 months, we have strengthened our key partnerships, among them the G20 and G7, as well as ICAO (the International Civil Aviation Organisation), FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations), the World Bank, IDB (Inter-American Development Bank), CAF, (The Development Bank of Latin America) and the EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development).

We have further strengthened our voice at the top of the United Nations, including the landmark recognition of tourism and UNWTO by the UN Secretary-General, he stressed.

Closer to our Members

UNWTO has made a significant leap to be on the ground next to our Members. This year, we opened the first Regional Office for the Middle East in Riyadh, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Built and opened in record time, it will serve as the platform to deliver our commitment to education and as a global centre for tourism and rural development, Pololikashvili urged.

Moving closer to our Members in other regions is an ongoing task and we will also work towards opening the first regional offices in Africa and the Americas, claimed the Secretary General.