

## Int'l tourism to reach pre-pandemic levels in 2024: UNWTO

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: According to the first UNWTO World Tourism Barometer of 2024, international tourism ended at 88 per cent of pre-pandemic levels in 2023, with 1.3 billion international arrivals. Remaining pent-up demand, increased air connectivity, and a stronger recovery of Asian markets and destinations, are expected to lead to a complete recovery by 2024 end, with initial estimates pointing to 2 per cent growth above 2019 levels.

However, this central forecast by UNWTO remains subject to the pace of recovery in Asia and to the evolution of existing economic and geopolitical downside risks. The positive outlook is reflected in the latest UNWTO Tourism Confidence Index survey, with 67 per cent of tourism professionals indicating better or much better prospects for 2024 compared to 2023.

As per the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, the Middle East led recovery in relative terms as the only region to overcome pre-pandemic levels with arrivals 22 per cent above 2019. Europe, the world's most visited region, reached 94 per cent of 2019 levels, supported by intra-regional demand and travel from the United States. Africa recovered 96 per cent of pre-pandemic visitors and Americas reached 90 per cent. Asia and the Pacific reached 65 per cent of pre-pandemic levels following the reopening of several markets and destinations. However, performance is mixed, with South Asia already recovering 87 per cent of 2019 levels and North-East Asia around 55 per cent.

Available data shows several destinations, including both large, established destinations as well as small and emerging ones, reporting double-digit growth in international arrivals in 2023 when compared to 2019. Four sub-regions exceeded their 2019 arrival levels: Southern Mediterranean Europe, Caribbean, Central America and North Africa.

International tourism receipts reached USD 1.4 trillion in 2023 according to preliminary estimates, about 93 per cent of the USD 1.5 trillion earned by destinations in 2019. Total export revenues from tourism (including passenger transport) are estimated at USD 1.6 trillion in 2023, almost 95 per cent of the USD 1.7 trillion recorded in 2019. Preliminary estimates on the economic contribution of tourism, measured in tourism direct gross domestic product (TDGDP) point to USD 3.3 trillion in 2023, or 3 per cent of global GDP. This indicates a recovery of pre-pandemic TDGDP driven by strong domestic and international tourism.

The sustained recovery is also reflected in the performance of industry indicators. According to the UNWTO Tourism Recovery Tracker, both international air capacity and passenger demand recovered about 90 per cent of pre-pandemic levels through October 2023 (IATA). Global occupancy rates in accommodation establishments reached 65 per cent in November, slightly above 62 per cent in November 2022 (based on STR data).

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