

Saudi Arabia urges more collaboration to drive sustainable tourism

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Saudi Arabia's Minister of Tourism Ahmed Al Khateeb while delivering the keynote speech at the 76th session of the United Nations general assembly, emphasized the critical need to accelerate climate action to ensure a sustainable future for the tourism sector.

At the United Nations high level debate, global leaders convened to discuss strategies, share best practices and experiences with a view toward putting sustainable and resilient tourism at the heart of an inclusive recovery – priorities that will enable successful delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSGDs).

As one of the hardest-hit sectors, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored a critical need to ensure the future of the tourism sector and further

made evident the need to protect the natural environment. The links between climate change and biodiversity loss highlight the need for an inclusive, and collaborative approach to developing a sustainable future for our sector.

In line with the aims of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia launched biodiversity initiatives to breed and protect endangered species. By 2030, The Kingdom will be conserving a total land area 11 times the size Belgium and has committed to protect 20% of its terrestrial, coastal, and marine environments. Combined with a partnership with the Middle East Green Initiative to plant a further 40 billion trees across the region, the project will restore an area equivalent to 200 million hectares of degraded land, representing 5% of the global target of planting 1 trillion trees.

Further demonstrating the Kingdom's leadership and commitment to the sector, Saudi Arabia has implemented key global initiatives to drive forward a sustainable future. Announced by HRH the Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman during the Saudi Green Initiative in October 2021 and at COP 26, the Sustainable Tourism Global Center is a multi-stakeholder action platform that will accelerate the tourism sector's transition to net zero emissions, as well as drive action to protect nature and support communities.

The Tourism Panel on Climate Change (TPCC), a new tourism and climate science assessment and measurement STGC initiative, modeled on the IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – will advance climate resilient tourism and demonstrate the important role of the travel and tourism sector in contributing to better human development, and the imperative of responding positively to the existential climate crisis we face.□

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