

## UN tourism confirms new secretary-general

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 10 November, 2025



### UN Tourism 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA 7 - 11 NOVEMBER 2025

Dhaka: The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) general assembly has confirmed Shaikha Nasser Al Nowais of the United Arab Emirates as its next Secretary-General for the 2026-2029 term, following her election by the Executive Council in May.

She was chosen by a majority vote of more than 160 member countries during the Assembly's 26th session in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Al Nowais becomes the first woman and the first Emirati to lead the UNWTO since its founding 50 years ago — a milestone that reflects global recognition of Emirati leadership and the UAE's commitment to women's empowerment.

UAE Minister of Economy and Tourism Abdullah bin Touq Al Marri, who led the national delegation, said the election marks "a milestone moment" for the UAE, the Arab world, and the global tourism sector,

adding that it underscores the UAE's growing role in promoting sustainable tourism and international cooperation.

He credited the vision of the UAE's leadership — President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and Vice President Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan — for championing innovation and empowering national talent.

Al Marri thanked UNWTO member states for their support and reaffirmed the UAE's commitment to advancing global tourism sustainability, partnerships, and best practices.

He also noted the role of the UAE's aviation sector in positioning the country as a global travel and cultural hub.

In her address to the Assembly, Al Nowais expressed gratitude for member states' confidence, saying, "Tourism is not merely an economic industry; it is a bridge for human connection and sustainable development."

She pledged to focus on innovation, empowerment, and inclusivity, ensuring the tourism sector creates opportunities for youth, women, and local communities.

She outlined a vision for transforming global tourism through collaboration, capacity-building, financing, and digital innovation, particularly in developing nations.

The 26th UNWTO General Assembly, held from Nov. 7-11 in Riyadh, discussed strengthening sustainability, human capital, digital transformation, and competitiveness in global tourism, and ways to rebuild the sector on more resilient and inclusive foundations post-pandemic.

-B