

## UNWTO AND WHO AGREE TO FURTHER COOPERATION IN COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Geneva, Switzerland, 11 March 2020** – The Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Zurab Pololikashvili led a high- delegation to the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva to further advance the two agencies' coordinated response to the worldwide Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak.

WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus welcomed the delegation to Geneva and thanked UNWTO for its close collaboration since the very start of the ongoing public health emergency. On the back of the productive meetings, the heads of both United Nations agencies stressed the need to include the following guiding principles:

- The importance of international cooperation and responsible leadership at this critical time,
- The solidarity of the tourism sector and of individual tourists, as well as the responsibility both have for helping minimize the spread and impact of COVID-19
- The key role tourism can play in both containing the COVID-19 outbreak and in leading future response efforts

UNWTO Secretary-General Pololikashvili said: "The COVID-19 outbreak is first and foremost a public health issue. UNWTO is following the lead of WHO, with whom we have enjoyed an excellent working relationship from day one. This meeting reaffirmed the importance of strong cooperation and international solidarity and I welcome the Director-General's recognition of the role tourism can play both now and in the future."

### Proportionate Response

Mr. Pololikashvili and Dr Tedros confirmed the two UN agencies' commitment to ensuring **any response to COVID-19 is proportionate, measured and based on the latest public health recommendations.**

Mr. Pololikashvili added that the tourism value chain touches upon every part of society. This makes tourism uniquely placed to **promote solidarity, collaboration and concrete action across borders in these challenging times** and also ideally positioned to once again drive future recovery.

## Responsible Communications

At the same time, the heads of UNWTO and WHO called for **responsible communications and reporting of the worldwide COVID-19 outbreak**. The UN agencies stress the importance of ensuring all communications and actions are evidence-based so as to avoid stigmatizing sections of society and spreading panic.

## Next Steps

UNWTO and WHO will liaise with UNWTO Members, as well as with the Chairs of all the UNWTO Regional Commissions and the Chair of the Executive Council to further advance tourism's response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

UNWTO will also communicate with other UN bodies, including ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) and the IMO (International Maritime Organization), and with IATA (International Air Transport Association) and with key sector stakeholders to ensure tourism's response is coordinated and consistent.

**UNWTO Web site:** <https://www.unwto.org>

**WHO Web site:** <https://www.who.int/>