

THE FUTURE IS NOW! UNWTO RECOGNIZES WORLD'S BEST INNOVATORS FACING UP TO COVID-19

Madrid, Spain, 8 May 2020 – *The top solutions for accelerating the recovery of tourism have been celebrated in the 'Healing Solutions for Tourism' Challenge. Launched by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO) and with the aim of identifying start-ups with ready-to-implement ideas for mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the sector, the initiative attracted more than 1,000 applicants from 100 countries.*

Tourism has been among the hardest hit of all major economic sectors. To **rebuild confidence in travelling and to enhance tourism's contribution** to wider societal recovery, UNWTO called on **innovators to share their ideas for positive change**. Entrepreneurs pitched in **three categories**: Healing for People, Healing for Prosperity and Healing for Destinations. Over **1,100 applications** were received and from the **30 shortlisted** projects, **nine were selected** by a panel of sector leaders, including UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili.

In the category of **Healing for People**, the **four finalists** were CleanScan /Chameleon Welcome Back (Canada/USA), Outpost Healthy Destinations (Canada), SeeTrue (Israel) and Smart Occupancy (Spain). In **Healing for Prosperity**, the **two finalists** were MyStay (Czech Republic) and WAAM (Poland). The **three finalists** in **Healing for Destinations** were Airside (United States of America), Beautiful destinations (United States of America) and iBonus COVID19 Digital Prevention System (Hong Kong, China).

“Solutions for all”

Mr Pololikashvili said: “Tourism faces the biggest challenge of a generation. But, as this event shows, tourism can **deliver solutions** for all. We now have an **opportunity to rethink tourism** and do things better. **Virtual reality, artificial intelligence and big data** will all have a part to play in our joint response to COVID-19, and in building resilience for the future. As such, I thank all those who took part in the Healing Solutions initiative and look forward to the winning ideas being scaled up to make a real difference in the challenging times ahead.”

The Challenge enjoyed strong support, both within and outside of the tourism sector. Addressing the finalists during the virtual event hosted by UNWTO were Dr. Gaudenz Silberschmidt, Director, Health and Multilateral Partnerships (WHO), and Hannah R.

Messerli, Senior Specialist, Trade, Investment and Competitiveness at the World Bank Group.

From Madrid to the world

This event was made possible thanks to the **support of the city of Madrid**, UNWTO's home base and the capital of one of the worst-hit of all European countries.

Secretary-General Pololikashvili extended his gratitude to Mayor José Luis Martínez-Almeida for providing the 'La Nave' space from which to host the Challenge and for agreeing to run **pilot implementations of the winning Healing Solutions**. "Your support generates trust, and trust is the new distinctive asset of sustainable tourism development and our overall recovery", Mr Pololikashvili concluded.

A **full list of the shortlisted start-ups** can be found on the [Healing Solutions for Tourism Challenge webpage](#).

Useful Links:

[UNWTO Recommendations for recovery](#)

[UNWTO Global Tourism Dashboard: Tourism and COVID-19](#)

[Message from Madrid: no time to waste as lost working hours devastate lives](#)

[100% of global destinations now have covid-19 travel restrictions, UNWTO reports](#)