

STRONGER, GREENER AND MORE INNOVATIVE: THE FUTURE OF TOURISM IN THE AMERICAS

Madrid, Spain, 18 June 2020 – Ministers from across the Americas have met to map a course for the sustainable growth of the region's tourism sector, a lifeline for many millions and a key driver of economic growth. Though kept apart physically due to the extraordinary circumstances, the 65th meeting of the World Tourism Organization (**UNWTO**) **Regional Commission for the Americas** saw Member States more united than ever in their determination to harness the power of tourism to recover from the economic and social impact of COVID-19 and drive future growth.

The second of the UNWTO Regional Commission meetings to be held virtually, the high-level discussions were opened by Chairman and Minister of Tourism for Jamaica, Edmund Bartlett. He was joined by UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, and Ministers of Tourism for 22 Member States from across the Americas. The meeting was held as destinations across the region continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, as well as allowing Member States to share their responses to the shared challenge, discussions also focused on plans for **sustainable recovery and future resilience**, with an emphasis on the potential of **digitization** and new ideas and in boosting **investment** in green business models.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: *"The temporary suspension of tourism has had a significant impact on the Americas. This meeting showed the shared determination to grow back stronger and better once the conditions allow. Sustainability and innovation will be at the heart of tourism's recovery, both in the Americas and in every other global region. The sector's return to growth will be a lifeline for many millions of people across the Americas while also helping protect and promote the region's many cultures and natural heritage."*

Strong Partnerships for Innovative and Sustainable Tourism

Reflecting the dynamic nature of tourism and the sector's ability to adapt, the meeting featured the announcement of a joint collaboration between UNWTO and the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) designed to promote **digital transformation** and positive change. The "Beyond Tourism Innovation Challenge", will identify the best new ideas for the disruption of tourism, with a focus on sustainability and creating **opportunities for all**.

The meeting of the Commission for the Americas also saw a presentation of UNWTO's joint project with the IFC (International Finance Corporation). The "Green Investments for Sustainable Tourism" initiative is designed to promote more investment in the greening of the sector, with a special emphasis on hospitality and on small-and-medium-sized businesses.

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