

UNWTO MINISTERIAL MEETINGS - SHARED DETERMINATION TO RESTART TOURISM AND DRIVE RECOVERY

Madrid, Spain, 7 July 2020 – Over the past month, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) was able to hold virtually meetings of its five Regional Commissions to share responses to the challenge of COVID-19 and their plans for the restart of tourism in the wake of the pandemic.

For the first time ever, the **five regional bodies of Member States** of the United Nations specialized agency, met virtually rather than in person. The annual series of meetings got underway with the Regional Commission for Africa, and this was followed by meetings of the Regional Commissions for the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific and finally the Middle East region. In all instances, representatives of Member States, including Ministers of Tourism, were joined UNWTO Affiliate Members, including leaders from across the private sector.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “The meetings of the UNWTO Regional Commissions has shown the **universal determination to restart tourism**, and to do so with an **emphasis on sustainability** and on ensuring the benefits are shared as widely as possible. At the same time, the insights of UNWTO Member States from around the world make clear that, while some destinations are re-opening to tourists, this crisis is not yet over in many places, and that the tourism sector continues to require **strong political and economic support** if we are to safeguard livelihoods and protect whole economies in these challenging times.”

In the final meeting of this round, the Regional Commission for the Middle East featured nine Ministers of Tourism, as well as representatives from the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, the Arab Tourism Organization, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Islamic Development Board.

Chaired by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the virtual meeting focused on ensuring all destinations are ready to welcome tourists back, with enhanced hygiene protocols in place so as to make **tourists feel safe and confident**. Discussions also centred on the important role **innovation** and **digital transformation** will play in the future of tourism across the Middle East region.

In all cases, UNWTO's leadership used the occasion of the meetings of the Regional Commissions to share the practical and technical support made available to both governments and the private sector. The [UNWTO Guidelines for Restarting Tourism](#) provide a clear action plan for growing back stronger and better, and the [Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package](#) outlines the support available to all Member States, including assistance in devising new marketing strategies.

Useful Links:

[UNWTO and Italy Look Ahead as Official Visit Marks Restart of European Tourism](#)

[UNWTO Members Meet to Enhance Cooperation and Restart Tourism in Asia and the Pacific](#)

[UNWTO Adapts Agenda for Africa to Accelerate Tourism Recovery](#)

[UNWTO Regional Departments](#)