

## UNWTO INVITES STARTUPS TO PITCH WAYS TO ACCELERATE SDGS

**Madrid, Spain, 14 July 2020** – *The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has announced the launch of a new Startup Competition as it looks to identify innovators with the power to further tourism's contribution to sustainable development*

As the United Nations specialized agency for tourism, UNWTO has been guiding the sector's efforts to contribute to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including through the [Tourism 4 SDGs online platform](#). Now, as the global community faces just 10 years to reach this ambitious agenda for people and planet, tourism's unique ability to advance several of the SDGs is more relevant than ever.

Against the backdrop of the **High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**, held under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UNWTO has launched the SDGs Global Startup Competition. Organized in partnership with Wakalua, **the innovation hub of leading tourism group Globalia**, the competition has **strong private sector backing**, with the Advanced Leadership Foundation, Amadeus, Amazon Web Services Activate, BBVA, ClarkeModet, The Far Co, Globant, Google, IE University, Mastercard, Mentor Day, Plug and Play and Telefónica as lead promoters of innovation.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashviki said: "Tourism's cross-cutting nature is unique. As a sector, it touches on almost every part of our economies and our societies. This competition will rally all sectors around efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and place **innovation and sustainability** at the heart of global economic recovery."

The competition is not only open to innovators within the tourism sector. Startups of every kind, from all over the world, are invited to participate provided that they:

- Are innovative in nature and provide value-added solutions
- Are sustainability-driven
- Are scalable, with potential for international growth and potential to be applied in corporations and destinations (countries, regions)
- Are an Early Stage or Series A startup
- Have a tested pilot and business plan
- Have been accelerated before
- Have a full-time team already in place

The 17 most disruptive startups (1 for each of the SDGs) will be given support to scale-up and make a real difference to the future of destinations. UNWTO will present the best ideas to its Member States, Affiliate Members and investors, providing them with a **unique networking and matchmaking opportunity**. Additional benefits on offer include the chance to pitch at a special UNWTO Demo Day and access to technological support and to the **UNWTO Innovation network**, as well as a curated mentorship programme with both one-on-one and group training sessions on key topics such as Intellectual Property, sustainability in business and leadership.

Applications are now open and will close on 20 September 2020. The winning startups will be announced in November. To find out more and to apply, visit the [UNWTO SDGs Global Startup Competition webpage](#).

### **Useful Links:**

[Tourism 4 SDGs Online Platform](#)

[UNWTO: Innovation, Investment and Digital Transformation](#)

[UNWTO and Telefónica Partner to Help Destinations Use Data and AI to Drive Tourism's Sustainable Recovery](#)