

## **Report of the Secretary-General**

### **UNWTO initiatives and activities in response to the COVID-19 Outbreak**

#### **Introduction**

- The world is facing an unprecedented global health, social and economic emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel and tourism is without any doubt among the most affected sectors. In an unprecedented shock, the COVID-19 pandemic has cut international tourist arrivals sharply down.
- Available data points to a double-digit decrease of 44% in the first four months of 2020, with arrivals in April down by 97%. This translates into a loss of 180 million international arrivals and about USD 195 billion in export revenues from international tourism in just four months. Arrivals to the Middle East are estimated to be down 44% between January and April 2020.
- Current scenarios<sup>1</sup> for the year point to declines of 58% to 78% in international tourist arrivals in 2020, depending on the speed of the containment, the duration of travel restrictions and the re-opening of national borders, although the outlook remains highly uncertain.
- This would translate into:
  - a drop of 850 million to 1.1 billion international arrivals
  - a loss of US\$ 910 billion to US\$ 1.2 trillion in export revenues
  - 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk.

#### **UNWTO Response**

##### **1. Monitoring the impact**

###### ***Assessing the Impact of COVID-19 on International Tourism***

- In order to provide comprehensive, reliable and update information on the impact of COVID-19 on international tourism, UNWTO released a first assessment report in early March with subsequent updates the latest of which – the **UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, Updated June 2020** – provides an evaluation of the first four months of 2020 and forward looking scenarios for 2020.
- UNWTO has also created an interactive online system to provide regularly updated data and insight to all Members – the **UNWTO Global Tourism Dashboard on Tourism and COVID-19**.

---

<sup>1</sup> UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, Issue 18, May 2020

### ***Monitoring COVID-19 Related Travel Restrictions – A Global Review for Tourism***

- The UNWTO is regularly monitoring travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. [COVID-19 Related Travel Restrictions - A Global Review For Tourism](#) provides an overview and analysis on the implementation of travel restrictions by governments as one of the means to address the global health crisis of COVID-19.
- The reports are updated on a regular basis to support mitigation and recovery efforts of the tourism sector, providing a global overview of the measures in place and analysing them from a tourism perspective. With a view to supporting the responsible and successful implementation of exit strategies through which countries are planning the gradual recovery of their tourism sector, the reports also aim at identifying critical issues and best practices of COVID-19 related travel measures and their implications on tourism.
- The monitoring of travel restrictions is carried out from the standpoint of travel facilitation for tourism purposes (i.e., focusing on temporary visitors/tourists) and does not take into account measures that are directed to residents, diplomats and other categories of travellers. In addition, these reports do not consider travel advisories issued by governments for their respective citizens/residents.

## **2. Policy Guidance and Coordination**

### ***The Global Tourism Crisis Committee***

- In order to ensure a coordinated and effective response, the Secretary-General established the Global Tourism Crisis Committee with the international public and private sector stakeholders, which held its first meeting on 19 March.
- The Committee is comprised of UNWTO, representatives of its Member States (Chairs of the UNWTO Executive Council and six Regional Commissions as well as some States nominated by the Commission Chairs), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank (WB), and the private sector – the UNWTO Affiliate Members, Airports Council International (ACI), Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).
- To date, the Committee has held five meetings allowing for exchange of information and alignment of messages and policy action.
- The Committee adopted two strategic guidance documents: 1) **UNWTO Recommendations for Actions – Supporting Jobs & Economies through Travel and Tourism**; and 2) **UNWTO Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism**.

### ***UNWTO Recommendations for Action***

Aiming to support governments in devising policies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and accelerate recovery, the [UNWTO Recommendations for Action](#) provide more than 100 practical actions in 23 areas for the three key crisis phases: **mitigation, recovery and building for the future**.

I. MANAGING THE CRISIS & MITIGATING THE IMPACT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incentivize job retention, sustain the self-employed and protect the most vulnerable groups</li> <li>2. Support companies' liquidity</li> <li>3. Review taxes, charges, levies and regulations impacting transport and tourism</li> <li>4. Ensure consumer protection and confidence</li> <li>5. Promote skills development, especially digital skills</li> <li>6. Include tourism in national, regional and global economic emergency packages</li> <li>7. Create crisis management mechanisms and strategies</li> </ol>
II PROVIDING STIMULUS & ACCELERATING RECOVERY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide financial stimulus for tourism investment and operations</li> <li>2. Review taxes, charges and regulations impacting travel and tourism</li> <li>3. Advance travel facilitation</li> <li>4. Promote new jobs and skills development, particularly digital ones</li> <li>5. Mainstream environmental sustainability in stimulus and recovery packages</li> <li>6. Understand the market and act quickly to restore confidence and stimulate demand</li> <li>7. Boost marketing, events and meetings</li> <li>8. Invest in partnerships</li> <li>9. Mainstream tourism in national, regional and international recovery programmes and in Development Assistance</li> </ol>
III. PREPARING FOR TOMORROW	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Diversify markets, products and services</li> <li>2. Invest in market intelligence systems and digital transformation</li> <li>3. Reinforce tourism governance at all levels</li> <li>4. Prepare for crisis, build resilience and ensure tourism is part of national emergency mechanism and systems</li> <li>5. Invest in human capital and talent development</li> <li>6. Place sustainable tourism firmly on the national agenda</li> <li>7. Transition to the circular economy and embrace the SDGs</li> </ol>

### ***UNWTO Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism***

#### **Recalling the Priorities for tourism recovery**

1. Provide liquidity and protect jobs
2. Recover confidence through safety & security
3. Public-private collaboration for an efficient reopening
4. Open borders with responsibility
5. Harmonize and coordinate protocols & procedures
6. Added value jobs through new technologies
7. Innovation and Sustainability as the new normal

***The UNWTO Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism*** provide high-level guidance for reopening tourism operations in the following areas.

1. Safe and Seamless Border Management (air, sea and ground travel)
2. Private Sector – Crosscutting Measures
3. Safe Air Travel
4. Hospitality
5. Tour Operators & Travel Agencies

6. Meetings & Events
7. Attraction & Thematic Parks
8. Destination Planning & Management

***UNWTO online monitoring system on country and international policy response to mitigate the effects of COVID-19***

- The [online dashboard on country and international policy response to mitigate the effects of COVID-19](#) provides unique global and weekly updated information on the policies in place in over 160 countries, as well as support by international and regional organizations that are relevant for tourism.
- Information shows that governments have responded quickly and strongly with the level and coverage of measures stepping up over time, and that most countries have adopted economy-wide stimulus packages (fiscal and monetary measures) along with job protection measures.
- Out of the 166 countries reporting measures, more than 139 countries have adopted fiscal and monetary policies, followed by policies supporting jobs and training which have been implemented by 93 countries. Fiscal and monetary policies are also the most widely implemented in all regions ([see UNWTO Briefing Note – Tourism and COVID-19, Issue 1. How are countries supporting tourism recovery?](#))
- The most recent measures for restarting tourism are primarily being adopted in Europe and Asia and the Pacific.

**Position tourism as a global policy priority in the response to the crisis**

- The Secretariat continues its active role in the UN Chief Executive Board (CEB) and its Executive Bodies and related networks, by strengthening the importance and recognition of tourism governance at the global level and the providing the Organization with opportunities to scale up its delivery capacity as well as to lead by example in the UN work for COVID-19.
- We are at the beginning of the United Nations “Decade of Action”. With just 10 years remaining to fulfil the 2030 Agenda and its Global Goals. UNWTO is making sure tourism is at the heart of the conversation through its global advocacy efforts in the development and trade agendas. In practice, UNWTO has organized discussions with the World Trade Organization (WTO) on Tourism Financing for the 2030 Agenda aiming at scaling up International Aid flows for Tourism Financing for the 2030 Agenda and has partnered with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in an initiative that builds on both G20 Declaration of T20 Ministers in Japan, as well as UNWTO leadership in the 2030 Agenda to strengthen Tourism Governance.

***Tourism and SDGs – contributing to the 2030 Development Agenda***

- In order to accelerate and scale up the achievement of the SDGs through tourism, UNWTO is engaged in several work streams in the public domain and with its tourism stakeholders, including the Affiliate Members. In order to widely share with and inspire policy makers and businesses, the Tourism4SDGs.org platform has been tweaked and enhanced in include a focus area for COVID-19 related actions in order to allow users to not only access a wide range of resources, add their own initiatives, findings and projects, motivate discussion and collaboration, and share content related to tourism and sustainable development, but to share and incorporate initiatives that address the COVID-19 response. The space also provides a roadmap for the tourism sector towards 2030, to build a smarter, competitive, inclusive and sustainable sector for the people and planet. The work aims at mainstreaming tourism to contribute to SDG 17 of the 2030 Agenda. Other functionalities in the platform for measuring tourism impact on the ground for tourism projects are currently ongoing.

- In addition, the Secretariat is coordinating with the United Nations (UN) system on the integration of a forthcoming Report on the UNWTO Tourism Ethics Convention, the approval of the MST with the UN Statistical Commission and the Resolutions on Sustainable Tourism with the UN General Assembly in 2020. UNWTO is also contributing to the 2020 HLPF to be held in July.

***Increase resources and strengthen UNWTO's capacity through partnerships - UNWTO and International Financial Institutions and International Organizations***

- UNWTO is currently undertaking a major step in assessing the required endogenous changes required in order to strengthen UNWTO's institutional framework to be aligned with the development multilateral and bilateral partners' requirements. Close monitoring and planning were introduced for extrabudgetary flows, indicating that International Finance Institutions (IFIs) are providing currently the biggest percentage of extrabudgetary resources to support projects on the ground for Members.
- With the aim of supporting Members States (MS) to recover quicker from the COVID-19 pandemic and have access to current resources, regular, comprehensive, and ongoing research on regional or global actions by International Organizations and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), has been undertaken and been shared with MS.
- UNWTO is currently strengthening and expanding its relations with IFIs through the negotiation of global framework agreements which will scale up and facilitate further joint delivery. Among the main results have been the signature of a MoU (October, 2019) and of a framework agreement (May 2020) with the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, leading to already securing funding for recovery efforts for several Member States, and nearly finalized negotiations for the signature of a framework agreement with the World Bank Group.
- UNWTO has been successfully including tourism within the UN system response for socio-economic recovery, forging a strong partnership with the United Nations Development system at large.

**3. Technical Assistance**

***COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package***

- In the COVID-19 aftermath, countries have to face a new reality of the tourism and travel industry and make every possible effort to shape the sector accordingly. It is advisable that countries try to make optimum utilization of available resources, knowledge and experience to put the sector back on the rails. In order to assist Member States to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector and develop an approach to recovery, UNWTO has developed a "COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package". The Package is structured around three main pillars: 1) Economic Recovery; 2) Marketing and Promotion; and 3) Institutional Strengthening and Building Resilience.
- The Tourism Recovery Package includes a comprehensive list of technical assistance activities, including both activities of a longer duration and with a wide scope, such as the development of new strategies, and activities of a relatively short duration with a specific focus, such as advice and training on selected topics. Depending on the situation in a country, Member States may need different technical assistance activities at various stages of the COVID-19 mitigation and recovery process. In consultation with individual Member States, tailor-made packages can be prepared with one or more technical assistance activities for the short and medium term.
- In mid-May, UNWTO sent the Technical Assistance Package to all Member States, and within one week responses were received from over 10 countries from all regions of the world, expressing interest in the Package. The budget for implementing technical assistance activities would have to be provided either directly by Member States or through external donors. UNWTO is actively liaising with development agencies to mobilize resources, and first commitments have been made by agencies to provide funding.

<https://www.unwto.org/news/unwto-releases-a-covid-19-technical-assistance-package-for-tourism-recovery>

#### 4. Innovation, Investments and Digital Transformation

- **UNWTO Healing Solutions for Tourism Challenge:** In response to the COVID-19 impact on tourism, the UNWTO launched the Healing Solutions for Tourism Challenge on 25 March this year. It has identified the top 9 initiatives to address the crisis from the health, economy and destination management perspectives and has presented them to the world tourism innovation ecosystem on 7 May. Throughout the 4-week call, 1183 projects from 110 countries were received. Colombia with 147 applications, Spain with 129 and USA with 60 applications were the top participating countries. Solutions mostly use technologies such as Virtual and Augmented Reality, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and Blockchain to deliver their impact.

##### [healing-solutions-tourism-challenge](#)

- **UNWTO SDGs Global Startup Competition:** Seeking the long-term recovery of tourism, our flagship annual startup competition has become the world's largest call to reach the most disruptive entrepreneurs from all economic sectors whose projects directly contribute to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and can be adapted to corporations and destinations for complying with the UN Decade of Action. This project will be launched in the second half of the year.
- **UNWTO Tourism Online Academy:** With more than 4000 students, the platform has experienced remarkable growth after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this year, and immersed in Phase 2 of the project, the Tourism Online Academy will involve 3 to 5 top universities from different countries all over the world and develop the courses in languages other than English. UNWTO is working closely with Cornell University, Externado de Colombia University, PolyU University, Northwestern University and Les Roches. A marketing plan to exponentially extend the international reach of the platform will be also implemented. In addition, different packages of scholarships will be allocated to our Member States.
- **2nd UNWTO Acceleration Programme:** Following its first edition in January, this programme will continue to deliver benefits to our Member States regarding training and capacity building for governments and entrepreneurs.
- **Investments promotion:** Reaching out to multilateral cooperation to develop potential economic recovery projects based on ongoing initiatives - **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**, **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)** and the **African Development Bank (AfDB)**.
- **Partnering with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group:** This partnership aims to ensure the tourism sector's long-term recovery by providing insights and experience in resourcing sustainable buildings and green finance. This initiative starting in June 4 consists of technical training programmes focused on **skills for sustainable investments** through resource efficiency and accreditations tools including platforms and certifications, **identification of potential aggregators** across the hotel value chain (investors, owners, operators, franchisees) in order to collaborate in the implementation of sustainability measures, and **facilitation of sustainable investment mechanisms** by enabling strong environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards and brand reputation to access to green finance opportunities and innovate sources of financing including green bonds, green securitizations and green credit facilities.

#### 5. Education and Training – the UNWTO Academy

- **Dedicated Online resources website:** Considering the COVID-19 situation, the UNWTO Academy has created a dedicated website 'Courses, Webinars and Digital Resources' that compiles different online Education and Training units on different topics, created and offered by UNWTO or Partner Institutions and Experts. Under the slogan "By studying from home today, we can acquire skills for tomorrow", this catalogue of online training initiatives is constantly updated with the contribution of UNWTO TedQual Certified institutions, UNWTO Affiliate Members, and other collaborating institutions and organizations. This new website also includes access to the UNWTO Online Academy, the e-library and articles & publications written and offered by partners on a broad range of subject areas.

<https://www.unwto.org/academy/courses-webinars-resources>

- **Webinars:** In this digital, online new normal, the UNWTO Academy has been organizing a series of webinars offered to the Member States and tourism professionals on a number of subjects regarding the impact of COVID-19 and on other relevant subjects offered by globally recognized experts.

<https://www.unwto.org/academy/unwto-live-webinars>

The UNWTO Academy is currently creating a series of new specific webinars that will be available to the Member States on demand.

- **UNWTO Students' League:** The UNWTO World Tourism Students League constitutes an innovative online environment to empower and motivate travel & tourism students to get involved within the sector. Students get real professional experience by creating and presenting innovative solutions for the challenges that tourism is facing today. Challenges are aligned with the SDGs, placing an emphasis on Goals 8,12 and 14. A total of 62 Teams from different universities around the world are participating in the 1st Global Edition and work is being carried out to set up national Leagues with UNWTO Member States

<https://www.unwto.org/students-league>

<https://www.unwto.org/students-league-platform/>

## 6. UNWTO Affiliate Members

In line with the pillars of the UNWTO Affiliate Members Programme of Work for 2020 in the current context, the activities set out below have been carried out to: **(a)** provide the Organization with the most relevant initiatives of the private sector affiliated to the UNWTO and **(b)** support the Affiliate Members (AMs) in their efforts to deal with the unprecedented impacts imposed by the COVID-19 Outbreak:

Strengthen UNWTO's capacity to deliver through the partnership with the affiliated private sector

- Providing the UNWTO with relevant inputs from the AMs**, as contribution to the elaboration of the guidelines, procedures and recovery packages issued by the Organization. To this end:
  - a broad **campaign to collect AMs most relevant initiatives** has been carried out and the information collected has been regularly shared with the UNWTO structures in charge of developing guidelines and reports;
  - Affiliate Members are participating in the **Global Tourism Crisis Committee**, through the institutional representation of the Chair of the Board, bringing solid proposals and action plans.
- Attending the UN Private Sector Emergency Focal Points Meetings**, updating them regarding the latest activities of UNWTO and collaborating on the ongoing initiatives UN – private sector
- Supporting relevant initiatives launched by UNWTO Affiliate Members (example: **IATA's Call to support the Middle East travel and tourism sector**, addressed to international financial institutions, country development partners and international donors).

Build better value for Members

**Sharing UNWTO activities and resources with the Affiliate Members.** UNWTO has kept the AMs permanently informed and updated, through the modern dedicated Platform [AMConnected](#), sharing with them the latest information, documents and online activities organized by the UNWTO including: UNWTO Calls on Tourism to be part of the Recovery Plans, UNWTO evaluation of COVID-19 impact on tourism, COVID-19 Recovery Package - technical assistance, online Webinars, etc.

- Holding regularly bilateral and multilateral meetings with the AMs, in different thematic and regional formats** (including meetings of the Board, Working Groups etc.), aiming at encouraging and providing support to **AMs to bring their initiatives and projects to the**

**attention of the Organization** and of the other Members ([set of updated reports](#) on the relevant COVID-19 initiatives received from the AMs available [here](#)).

## 7. Communications & outreach

The Communications Department is **UNWTO's first responder during the COVID-19 pandemic**, giving a voice to UNWTO's leadership via UNWTO.org, social media, copy and design content production and external engagement (see below, *data up until 22 June*).

The increased **publication frequency and the creation of a dedicated COVID-19 landing page**, have contributed to reaching **unprecedented results** in terms of public visibility, and positive response, including becoming part of the wider UN response to the pandemic and a landmark message by the **UN Secretary-General**, Antonio Guterres, in support of tourism as a pillar for recovery and commending UNWTO for its leadership.

These results are consolidating the success of the transition to the new **communications strategy** initiated over the past 24 months and rolled out over the past 12 months:

- **64.1 k media mentions of UNWTO**
- **853 million users** reached and **63k mentions on social media**
- **+EUR331 million advertisement value equivalency** have been generated (what the achieved media presence would have cost).

The **public messaging** on COVID-19 response builds on the following **pillars**:

- promoting **concrete outputs** across the Organization
- clarity in **tone and political intention of messages** of the Secretary-General
- **human angle** stories
- strong emphasis on **visual elements**
- **#TravelTomorrow** campaign

1. **UNWTO website**: All over the world, the pandemic has put **digital response** to the test, and consequently the return on investment of a solid digital infrastructure as now provided through UNWTO.org. The complete overhaul (design, technology, multilanguage contents) has allowed **traffic to grow +220% and attract +185% growth in new users**, alongside other positive key performance indicators such as duration of sessions and returning users. The dedicated **COVID-19 landing page** had to be completely updated to accommodate growing output and content diversification. **Production volume** is running at full capacity, having generated over **+100 new internal pages** during this period, an [interactive map](#) on policy and response measures across the world and a [webinar calendar](#) to structure the steep growth of this service for UNWTO users.
2. **Social Media and external engagement**: The first coherent **social media strategy & production** policy has paid off. With **+730 posts** across platforms, UNWTO social **followership grew by +40,000**, impressions, and likes and organic reach experienced unmatched growth levels across platforms. Social outreach and mass mailings have built on the same **narrative** and have been **mutually reinforcing** and also driving web traffic, on the back of **+90 mass mailings** in 3 languages, reaching **+105 million recipients** (news [releases](#), SG [statements](#), 4 issues of [UN Tourism News](#)).
3. **#TravelTomorrow**: Promoted through all platforms, it was part of key messaging for the Secretary-General as well as media engagements. The campaign was **embraced and actively promoted** by Members States, individual destinations, the private sector, and key influencers, reaching on average **+14,100 daily mentions** on social and legacy media, generating **479 million Twitter impressions** and over **46,000 Instagram post mentions**. These figures do not yet include the [landmark agreement with CNN International](#) to promote #TravelTomorrow, an agreement which proves that UNWTO has been able to identify and position a unique tone and messaging.

4. **Content production: +140 copywriting pieces** have been produced (news releases, SG statements, interviews, talking points and copy edits), many of them framed in **design pieces which totalled +200** (reports, newsletters, GIFS and videos, logos or infographics).
5. **Media impact: +63K media mentions** reaching a potential **audience of almost 853 million** is a record success. It is the first time ever that **top-tier media regularly cover UNWTO and request** information (Forbes, Time, The Guardian, The Atlantic, Bloomberg), amounting to an advertising value of **+331million euros**.

## **Regional Focus**

### **1. Webinars organized by the Regional Department for the Middle East and delivered to Middle East Members**

The impact of the COVID-19 health crisis has disrupted every industry in the global economy and the livelihoods of nations and communities that depend on travel and tourism have been affected in an unprecedented way as a result of travel restrictions and lockdown measures adopted by nations. During these unprecedented times UNWTO has endeavoured to remain engaged and connected with its partners and members and this has been possible with the use of various social media platforms whereby several informative webinars have been conducted on different current issues.

The following webinars has been conducted targeted to the Middle East Members' audience and private sector partners.

- Middle East UNWTO Healing Solutions Tourism Challenge Online Meeting for Member States focal points, 16 April 2020
- Communicating crisis, during and post COVID-19, Monday 4 May.
- The impact of COVID-19 on Tourism – Trying to make sense of so much or so little data - Middle East Insights, 11 May 2020

Upon the successful organization of the abovementioned webinars and the high number of audience from the public and private sectors, academia and media from the region and representing regional organizations, with over 600 and 400 participants, respectively in the second and third webinars, we are planning to conduct more sessions on different topics as follows:

- The Future of consumer rights protection in tourism post Covid-19, Middle East Insights, 16 July 2020
- 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Communicating crisis, during and post COVID-19, 22 July 2020.
- The future of the hospitality sector post COVID-19: Middle East insights, 27 July 2020.
- Innovative Healing solutions for the tourism private sector in the Middle East, 4 August 2020
- Webinar on UNWTO technical assistance package in collaboration with the World Bank, 17 August 2020
- Webinar on Statistics, 24 August 2020

At the invitation of our partners, we have also contributed the initiatives of UNWTO and plan to join the discussions in the following webinars:

- UNWTO-WHO-ICCA joint webinar on the Recovery post Covid-19 in August 2020
- UNWTO-Casa Árabe joint webinar on the Economic impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector in the Arab world in September 2020

### **2. Impact of COVID-19 on tourism sector in the Middle East (UNWTO Barometer – May 2020)**

- The COVID-19 pandemic is having an unparalleled impact on the global economy and a disruption of supply chains across all industries with travel and tourism being one of the most affected sectors.

- In terms of tourist Arrivals: The Middle East saw a 11% decrease in the first quarter, weighed down by an estimated 41% decline in March. The major international exhibition Expo 2020 Dubai which was expected to start next October was finally postponed to 2021 due to the coronavirus.
- 62% of destinations in the Middle East had completely closed their borders as of 27 April, according to UNWTO's third report on travel restrictions.
- International air traffic to the Middle East was down 13% in international RPKs in Q1 2020, with a drop of 46% in March in particular from key European and Asian markets.
- International visitor arrivals to the Middle East showed a y-o-y 32% decline in Q1 2020. Air bookings made from Africa and the Middle East for international travel went down 65% in Q1.
- According to **STR** in the Middle East, RevPAR fell 60.8%, occupancy drop 51.5% to 36.6% and ADR - 19%.
- All regions expect to see a recovery of international demand by the end of the year and in 2021.
- Expectations expressed by experts for a recovery of international demand in October-December are stronger in the Middle East, which is the only region to see some potential recovery by May-June, according to respondents in the region.
- Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are being strongly encouraged in Africa and respondents in the Middle East consider that PPPs would be effective to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

The Organization's programme of activities in the Middle East is built around the following five strategic objectives, which are also part of the SDG's and in line with the priorities expressed by Members States and agreed upon during the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Board of the Arab Council for Tourism Ministers of the League of Arab States, in Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia, in December 2019:

- **TOP 5 key areas of the Programme of work for the Middle East that should be prioritized** to support the swift recovery response are the following:
  1. Boost destinations competitiveness by promoting accessibility, and digital technology fueled innovation SDGs 8, 9, 10 and 17;
  2. Enlist key private sector players, promote PPPs, entrepreneurship and develop collaborative platforms SDGs 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17;
  3. Enhance decent jobs creation through institutional development and capacity building SDGs 4, 8, 10 and 17;
  4. Strengthen safety, security and resilience, facilitate travel, crisis communication, consolidate recovery and sustain growth through shocks SDGs 3, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 16; and
  5. Protect cultural, social and environmental heritage and promote sustainable tourism policies SDGs 8, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16.
- **Main key area of the priorities that should be realigned** to ensure a swift recovery response to COVID-19:
  - **Strengthen safety, security and resilience, facilitate travel, consolidate recovery and sustain growth through shocks SDGs 3, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 16** realignment is the action of changing or restoring something to a different or former position or state

- **Ranking of proposed key topics of capacity building/training sessions** that could be organized and conducted online or through virtual workshops by UNWTO includes:
  1. Crisis management and communication
  2. Marketing and promotion post-crisis
  3. Health protocols
  4. Developing domestic travel
  5. Innovation & entrepreneurship
  6. Environmental protection and sustainable Development Measurement
  
- One key new focus that emerged: **“Promoting intra-regional and domestic travel”**
  
- Suggestions **actions to be undertaken at the political level in times of pandemic crisis:**
  - Reinforce the political will in regard to the support of the tourism sector
  - Strengthen the collaboration between UNWTO Middle East Member States and encourage political leaders to unite forces in the combat against COVID-19
  - Mainstream the tourism industry in national agendas
  - Rebuild trust, advocate the Middle East and restore awareness of destinations
  - Foster travel facilitation
  - Create public-private partnerships to support reconstruction and debt stress
  - Facilitate the creation of investment funds to support regional tourism stakeholders
  
- Suggestions **actions to be undertaken at the technical level in times of pandemic crisis:**
  - Offer capacity-building opportunities and promote skills development (especially in crisis management, communication and digital skills)
  - Give assistance in developing health protocols adapted to the reality on the ground
  - Provide technical guidance in reframing existing marketing strategies to the COVID-19 era
  - Support small and medium-sized enterprises
  - Partake in the formulation of COVID-19 socio-economic recovery plans

### **3. New programme of activities – RDME**

- Digital skills training programme through UNWTO Academy
- A joint ICCA-UNWTO Training programme: ongoing discussions
  
- **Technical assistance package COVID-19**
  - Partnership is currently established with EBRD to support technical cooperation in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.
  
- **Knowledge work**
  - Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism within the G20 elaborated by UNWTO IE Centre for the Governance of Change in collaboration with the University of Surrey and an Advisory Board of other experts.
  - Regional Report on Women in Tourism in the Middle East. In the framework of the G20 Tourism Ministers Meeting, October 2020.
  - Quantitative research related to the ‘Framework for Inclusive Community Development’ within the G20.
  - Evaluation of the Tourism Statistical System and Calculation Methodology of Inbound Tourism and Tourism Expenditure, Saudi-Arabia (completed).
  - Project formulation mission on Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST), Saudi-Arabia (ongoing).
  - Human Capital Development Strategy to establish UNWTO Academy in Saudi Arabia (ongoing)
  - Revision of the Hotel Classification Scheme in Egypt (completed)

- Establishment of an international Training Centre in Egypt in association with UNWTO Academy (on hold).
  - Hotel Classification Scheme in Oman (ongoing discussions)
  - Tourism Experience Awards Programme in Qatar (ongoing)
  - Tourism Statistics and TSA for the UAE (ongoing discussions)
  - Participation in regional organizations meetings, particularly those of the Council of Arab Tourism Ministers of the League of Arab States
  - Collaboration with regional organizations, especially the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Arab Tourism Organization (ATO) with whom UNWTO have signed an MoU
  - Exploring further collaboration with the secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) through a signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (ongoing discussions)
  - Exploring collaboration with regional organizations such as the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).
- **Capacity Building**
    - Executive training workshop on Leadership programme on sustainability on Tourism Destinations, jointly with Module University, Dubai, UAE April 2019
    - UNWTO Academy Course on Culture and Heritage tourism, Royal Commission for Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, September 2019.
    - Webinars virtual courses/programmes for Bahraini diplomats in collaboration with the ministry of Foreign Affairs/Mohamed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa Academy for Diplomatic Studies, through UNWTO Academy.