UNWTO Official Visit to Italy as Borders Re-Open Across the Schengen Zone

Rome, Italy, 1 July 2020 – Against the backdrop of the re-opening of borders across Europe, a high-level delegation from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has arrived in Italy to begin a first official visit to a Member State since the COVID-19 pandemic brought international travel to a standstill.

The closure of tourism operations for several months has had a devastating effect for many businesses and millions of livelihoods across the world. To kickstart recovery, countries within the Schengen Zone (26 countries in Europe) are now reopening their borders to tourists.

Following an official invitation by Italy, the UNWTO Secretary-General started an official visit (1-4 July), and met the Minister of Culture, Cultural Heritage and Tourism Dario Franceschini, to learn more of the country’s plans for the steady and sustainable restart of a sector that is a leading employer and helps preserve the country’s unique cultural heritage.

Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “Strong domestic leadership and a commitment to cooperating across borders are imperative for the responsible return of tourism and the many benefits it offers, both within the Schengen Zone and worldwide. UNWTO is leading the restart of tourism, and Italy has demonstrated its commitment to harnessing the power of the sector to drive wider societal recovery.”

Guiding tourism’s restart

Mr Pololikashvili commended the Italian Government on their efforts thus far and emphasized his continued support for making sure that all tourism related activities can gradually restart. He also presented the resources that UNWTO has developed to help guide tourism’s restart, including the Recommendations for Recovery, a roadmap for both governments and the private sector. Over the next four days of the visit, the Secretary-General will visit Rome, Milan and Venice, where he will get a close insight into how tourism sector and various destinations have been responding to the devastating impact of the COVID-19.
This is the first official trip undertaken by UNWTO since restrictions on travel were introduced in response to the pandemic. During the lockdown phase, the United Nations specialized agency has been working closely with its Member States and the private sector to mitigate the impact on jobs and economies while also preparing for tourism's restart.