UNWTO Members Meet to Enhance Cooperation, Build Trust and Restart Tourism in Asia and the Pacific

Madrid, Spain, 1 July 2020 – Representatives of 29 Member States and territories joined private sector leaders to identify ways of restarting tourism across Asia and the Pacific region in a safe and sustainable manner. The 32nd meeting of the Joint Commission for Asia and the Pacific of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) was held as growing numbers of countries begin to re-open their borders to tourism.

Working together to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on tourism was top of the agenda, with participants agreeing on the need to strengthen international cooperation to respond effectively and then restart a sector that supports millions of livelihoods across the region. In particular, Ministers of Tourism and Heads of Delegation from the 29 countries and territories identified priorities for the months ahead, including the need to implement enhanced safety and security protocols in order to restore confidence and get tourism moving again.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “Asia and the Pacific was the first global region to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden and unexpected fall in tourist arrivals has hurt economies, put many jobs at risk and threatened the progress made in sustainable development, especially in those countries that are particularly dependent on tourism. As we restart tourism, international cooperation is key to building trust and giving people the confidence to start travelling again.”

The meeting, which given the extraordinary circumstances was held virtually, featured more than 150 participants both from UNWTO Member States as well as from across the network of UNWTO Affiliate Members. The high-level discussions built on the United Nations specialized agency’s existing work in the region, including its focus on making tourism an important driver of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The 33rd UNWTO Joint Commission Meeting for Asia and the Pacific will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 2021, with the date still to be confirmed.
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