

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL: “IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE REBUILD THE TOURISM SECTOR IN A SAFE, EQUITABLE AND CLIMATE FRIENDLY MANNER”

Madrid, Spain, 25 August 2020 – As part of the wider UN response to COVID-19, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres released today a thematic brief on the impact the pandemic has had on tourism. Drawing on the latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the lead author of the publication, it warns that as many as 100 million direct tourism jobs are at risk, and the massive drop in export revenues from tourism could reduce global GDP by as much as 2.8%. The brief stresses that tourism is an essential pillar of the SDGs and the most vulnerable workers and nations at greatest risk.

Tourism has been among the hardest hit of all sectors by COVID-19 and **no country has been unaffected**, with restrictions on travel and a sudden drop in consumer demand leading to an unprecedented fall in international tourist numbers.

The “COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism” Policy Brief from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, makes clear the impact that the pandemic has had on global tourism and how this affects everything from jobs and economies to wildlife conservation and the protection of cultural heritage.

Mr Guterres said: that “It is imperative that we **rebuild the tourism sector**” in a “safe, equitable and climate friendly” manner and so “ensure tourism regains its position as a provider of decent jobs, stable incomes and the protection of our cultural and natural heritage”. The UN Secretary-General further underscored that tourism is **one of the world’s most important economic sectors**, providing “livelihoods to hundreds of millions more”, while it “boosts economies and enables countries to thrive”, and at the same time allowing “people to experience some of the world’s cultural and natural riches and brings people closer to each other, highlighting our common humanity”.

The Brief warns that the impacts of the pandemic on tourism are **already placing conservation efforts in jeopardy**. Citing case studies from around the world, it warns that the sudden fall in tourism revenues has cut off funding for **biodiversity conservation** and, with livelihoods at risk in and around protected areas, cases of poaching and looting are expected to rise. Again, the impact on biodiversity and ecosystems will be particularly critical in SIDS and LDCs. Furthermore, with **90% of World Heritages Sites having closed** as a result of the pandemic, both tangible and intangible heritage is at risk in all parts of the world.

Five points priorities moving forward

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "Tourism touches on nearly every part of our societies and is a cornerstone of growth and employment, both in developed and developing economies. The United Nations Secretary-General echoes the five key priority areas that UNWTO has identified for tourism to return and drive wider recovery, and both governments and the private sector now have a duty to put this plan into action."

The Policy Brief notes that **women, youth** and **workers in the informal economy** are most at risk from job losses and business closures across the tourism sector. At the same time, destinations most reliant on tourism for jobs and economic growth, including **SIDS** and Least Developed Countries (**LDCs**) are **likely to be hardest** hit, including through an anticipated fall in foreign direct investment (FDI).

In addition to calling for strong support for the sector in mitigating these massive impacts, the Brief stresses that **this crisis represents an opportunity to rethink tourism**, including how it contributes to the SDGs. To this end, the Policy Brief provides **Five Priorities for the restart of tourism**, all aimed at ensuring a more resilient, inclusive and carbon neutral sector. These priorities are:

1. **Mitigate** socio-economic impacts on livelihoods, particularly women's employment and economic security.
2. **Boost** competitiveness and build resilience, including through economic diversification and encouragement of MSMEs.
3. **Advance** innovation and digital transformation of tourism
4. **Foster** sustainability and green growth
5. Enhanced **focus on coordination**, and responsible leadership

Alongside penholder UNWTO, a further 11 United Nations agencies contributed to the Policy Brief, highlighting the sector's unique importance and outreach.

Enlaces de interés:

[Secretary-General's Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism](#)

[UN Secretary-General Video Message on Tourism and COVID-19](#)

[The Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism: A Visual Guide](#)

[Secretary-General's Policy Brief on Tourism and COVID-19: Key Messages](#)