

## UN Policy Brief on Tourism and COVID 19

If tourism brings us together, then travel restrictions keep us apart.

More importantly, restrictions on travel also prevent tourism from delivering on its potential to build a better future for all.

This week the United Nations Secretary-General launched the Policy Brief “**COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism**”, which UNWTO assumed the lead role in producing.

This landmark report makes clear what is at stake – the threat of losing tens of millions of direct tourism jobs, the loss of opportunities for those vulnerable populations and communities who stand to benefit most from tourism, and the real risk of losing vital resources for safeguarding natural and cultural heritage across the world.

Tourism needs to thrive, and this means that travel restrictions must be eased or lifted in a timely and responsible manner. It also means that **policy decisions need to be coordinated across borders** to face up to a challenge which does not care about borders! “COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism” is a further element in the roadmap for the sector to regain its unique status as a source of hope and opportunity for all.

This is true for **both developing and developed nations**, and all governments and international organizations have a stake in supporting tourism.

But we can only call on governments to back up strong words with equally strong actions if we move first and take the lead. As destinations open up again, we are resuming in-person visits, to show support, to learn, and to build confidence in international travel.

On the back of our successful visits to destinations in Europe, UNWTO delegations are now seeing first-hand how the **Middle East is ready to restart tourism** safely and responsibly. In Egypt President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and his government made clear how strong, targeted support, has saved jobs and allowed tourism to weather this unprecedented storm. Now iconic sites such as the Pyramids are ready to welcome back tourists, with the safety of both tourism workers and tourists themselves a priority. Similarly, the government of Saudi Arabia has warmly welcomed UNWTO and expressed a firm commitment to continue building the Kingdom’s tourism sector, first for domestic visitors and then international visitors.

The pandemic is far from over. As cases across the world make clear, **we must be ready to act fast to save lives**. But it also now also clear that **we can also take decisive action to protect jobs** and safeguard the many benefits tourism delivers, both for people and planet.

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