

International Tourism Down 70% as Travel Restrictions Impact All Regions

Madrid, Spain, 27 October 2020 – Restrictions on travel introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic continue to hit global tourism hard, with the latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) showing a **70% fall in international arrivals** for the first eight months of 2020.

According to the newest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, international arrivals **plunged 81% in July and 79% in August**, traditionally the two busiest months of the year and the peak of the Northern Hemisphere summer season. The drop until August represents 700 million fewer arrivals compared to the same period in 2019 and translates into a **loss of US\$ 730 billion** in export revenues from international tourism. This is more than **eight times the loss experienced on the back of the 2009 global economic and financial crisis**.

“This unprecedented decline is having dramatic social and economic consequences, and puts millions of jobs and businesses at risk,” warned UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili. “This underlines the urgent need to safely restart tourism, in a timely and coordinated manner”.

Recovery short-lived

All world regions recorded large declines in arrivals in the first eight months of the year. Asia and the Pacific, the first region to suffer from the impact of COVID-19, saw a 79% decrease in arrivals, followed by Africa and the Middle East (both - 69%), Europe (-68%) and the Americas (-65%).

Following its **gradual reopening of international borders**, Europe recorded comparatively smaller declines in July and August (-72% and -69%, respectively). The recovery was short-lived however, as travel restrictions and advisories were reintroduced amid an increase in contagions. On the other side of the spectrum, Asia and the Pacific recorded the largest declines with -96% in both months, reflecting the closure of borders in China and other major destinations in the region.

Demand for travel remains largely subdued due to the ongoing uncertainty about the pandemic and low confidence. Based on the latest trends, **UNWTO expects an overall drop close to 70% for the whole of 2020**.

Rebound in international demand expected by Q3 2021

UNWTO's Panel of Experts foresees a rebound in international tourism in 2021, mostly in the third quarter of 2021. However, around 20% of experts suggest the rebound could occur only in 2022. Travel restrictions are seen as the main barrier standing in the way of the recovery of international tourism, along with slow virus containment and low consumer confidence. The lack of coordinated response among countries to ensure harmonized protocols and coordinated restrictions, as well as the deteriorating economic environment were also identified by experts as important obstacles for recovery.

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