

UNWTO in Namibia - First Visit to African Member State Since Start of the Pandemic

Windhoek, Namibia, 4 November 2020 – *The Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has paid a first visit to an African Member State since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The three-day official visit to Namibia reaffirms UNWTO's commitment to the continent and featured a series of high-level talks aimed at strengthening existing partnerships and looking to a sustainable, resilient future.*

As the United Nations specialized agency for tourism, UNWTO has been actively guiding the sector's recovery and restart from this unprecedented crisis. To reflect the new challenges, it has **worked directly with its African Member States**, including Namibia, to adapt the 2030 Agenda for Africa: Tourism for Inclusive Growth, the landmark roadmap for the responsible growth of tourism across the continent. This official visit offered a first chance to follow up on virtual meetings and advance the preparations for the restart of a sector upon which millions of African livelihoods depend.

Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili met with His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia for talks on realizing the potential of tourism to drive sustainable development, including for youth, women and rural communities. In addition, the Secretary-General commended the head of state for his leadership, particularly with regards to the **international tourism revival initiative** which includes the key health and safety protocols drawn up by UNWTO. Alongside this, a meeting with Vice President H.E. Nangolo Mbumba allowed the UNWTO leadership further opportunity to express support for African Member States as they use tourism to recover and grow. Additionally, the UNWTO delegation met with Honourable Pohamba Shifeta, MP, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism to identify ways of growing the country's tourism sector, including a greater focus on gastronomy tourism, rural and community-based tourism.

'UNWTO Committed to Africa'

"UNWTO is committed to working closely with our African Member States to realize the potential of tourism to help societies recover from the effects of the pandemic and enjoy long-term sustainable growth," Secretary-General Pololikashvili said. "The UNWTO Agenda for Africa maps our collective way forward, and I pleased to see first-hand the commitment shown by the Government of Namibia to support tourism at this vital time and embrace the sector as a driver of positive change for all."

Highlighting UNWTO's determination to lead by example, **show travel is safe and be active on the ground** when conditions are right, the delegation visited several of Namibia's leading tourist sites. These included the Namib Sand Sea, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is ready to welcome tourists again, and also historical Swakopmund and the up-and-coming Walvis Bay tourist destination. Secretary-General Pololikashvili met with Honourable Neville Andre, Governor of the Erongo Region of Namibia, to offer UNWTO's strongest support for local tourism, including businesses.

Additionally, the Namibia Tourism Expo provided an opportunity for UNWTO to **engage with public and private sector leaders** from across the region and sent a clear message to the world that Namibia, "The Land of the Brave" is open and ready to welcome tourists again.

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