

Ambassadors to Spain Join Call for Collaborative Restart of Tourism

Madrid, Spain, 13 November 2020 – Ambassadors to Spain from the region of Europe gathered today for a high-level meeting with the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The virtual meeting with Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili focused on the timely and responsible restart of tourism across the continent.

Ambassadors **act as a bridge** between the Secretariat of the United Nations specialized agency in Madrid and their home countries. Mr Pololikashvili – who himself served as Ambassador of Georgia to Spain before taking up the leadership of UNWTO – highlighted the important role that diplomats must play in **coordinating efforts to lift restrictions** on travel and to restore confidence in international tourism.

High on the agenda was tourism’s potential for **helping rural communities** recover from the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, echoing the year-long focus of UNWTO **on tourism for rural development**, which was also the theme of World Tourism Day 2020. The Ambassadors were also informed of UNWTO’s leading role in guiding tourism’s restart, including through the planned creation of an **International Code for the Protection of Tourists**.

The meeting counted on the participation of representatives from 36 of UNWTO’s European Member States. In addition, three other European countries who are not UNWTO members joined the meeting, reflecting the cross-cutting relevance of tourism for overall economic recovery.

“Strong diplomatic relations will enable safe and seamless travel for tourists, ensuring our sector and the many benefits it offers will return as soon as possible”, said Mr Pololikashvili when stressing the importance of maintaining close relations with member states-

A total 34 Heads of Diplomatic Missions took part in the virtual high-level meeting, with interventions from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, and Uzbekistan.

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