

Ideas to Build Back Better: SDGs Start-up Competition Final Held in Madrid

Madrid, Spain, 18 May 2021 - *Innovators with ideas to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals have been celebrated in Madrid. The final of the UNWTO SDGs Global Startup Competition saw 25 entrepreneurs and enterprises recognized for their creativity and commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 ambitious goals.*

Organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), with the support of over 25 partners from across the global innovation ecosystem, this competition is the biggest innovation initiative ever launched by any part of the wider United Nations system. In all, more than 10,000 applications from 138 different countries were received, each of them promising to advance one or more of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Winners with common goal

"Today's winners can inspire new ways to accelerate progress towards sustainability, equality and inclusivity," said **United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres** in a message congratulating the finalists. Every global region was represented among the **25 winners** at the final event in Madrid, held on the eve of the FITUR International Tourism Trade Fair.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili added that "the winners of the UNWTO SDGs Global Startup Competition can get us back on track to building a better, more sustainable future for both people and planet".

The competition final highlighted the **power of tourism to help reach the 2030 Agenda** through driving progress in waste and resource management, green energy production, destination experiences and decarbonization, as well as through creating decent jobs for all, promoting inclusivity and gender equality and protecting ecosystems.

Political and corporate support

The event also highlighted the strong level of political support for UNWTO's mission to promote innovation and entrepreneurship. Joining Secretary-General Pololikashvili at Madrid's Royal Theatre were the Ministers of Tourism of Sri Lanka and Panama, the Ambassador of Qatar to Spain, the Mayor of Madrid José Luis Martínez-Almeida and Spain's Secretary of State for Tourism, Fernando Valdés.

Against the backdrop of the final, UNWTO also supported Apolitical and Mastercard during a special panel event on Digital Country Partnerships, highlighting key actors rebuilding tourism through innovation. Special thanks were also given to sponsors and collaborators of the SDGs Global Startup Competition, including the main partner, Wakalua (the innovation hub of Globalia), partner airline Qatar Airways, and collaborators such as Telefonica, Amazon Web Services, Amadeus, amongst others – see the [full list here](#).

Message to World Tourism Organization SDG Global Startup Competition

We have less than 10 years to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

And we are in the midst of a global pandemic that is setting back progress.

To get back on track, we need to unleash the power of new ideas and embrace a sustainable transformation.

Tourism has a critical role to play, and I commend the United Nations World Tourism Organization for its leadership.

Its SDGs Global Startup Competition is promoting innovation and a better recovery.

The competition attracted more than 10,000 applicants from 138 countries, and the ideas are as diverse as the innovators themselves.

All these startups have the potential to be scaled up and drive a positive transformation in our societies.

They can inspire new ways to accelerate progress towards sustainability, equality and inclusivity.

I thank everyone who has taken part in the UNWTO SDGs Global Startup Competition, and I look forward to seeing these bright ideas being put into action.

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Related Links:

A full list of the [25 winners](#) can be found here