

UNWTO Commission for the Middle East

Forty-seventh meeting
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 27 May 2021

CME/47/CR
Madrid, June 2021

THE 47th MEETING OF THE UNWTO COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 27 May 2021

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1. Adoption of the Agenda	2
2. Recommendations of the Commission	3-10
3. Elections results	12
4. List of participants	13

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Adoption of the Agenda
2. Communication of the Chair (UAE)
3. Report of the UNWTO Secretary-General
4. Implementation of the Programme of Work for 2020-2021
 - 4.1. Regional Activities
 - 4.2. Affiliate Members Activities
5. Results of the Survey on Members' priorities for the General Programme of Work and Budget for the period 2022-2023
6. Discussion on the harmonized Protocol standards for the Middle East region
7. Nominations and elections to statutory organs and their subsidiary bodies
 - 7.1 Nomination of candidates to the various General Assembly offices and its subsidiary bodies
 - 7.1.1. **one** Vice-President of the General Assembly
 - 7.1.2. **one** Candidate to the Credentials Committee
 - 7.2 Nomination of candidates to represent the Middle East region in the Executive Council and its subsidiary bodies
 - 7.2 **Two** candidates to the Executive Council
 - 7.3 Nomination of candidates to chair the UNWTO Commission for the Middle East
 - 7.3.1 **one** Chair of the Commission for the Middle East
 - 7.3.2 **two** Vice-Chairs of the Commission for the Middle East
8. Nomination of the host of the World Tourism Day for 2023
9. Place and date of the forty-eighth meeting of the Commission (in line with item 6 of the ComReg. "Important Note on the election of the host countries of the next Meetings of the Regional Commissions and other UNWTO events.")
10. Other matters

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CME/CR/1(XLVII)

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The Commission,

Having taken note of the procedures of the electronic voting system for the Regional Commission for the Middle East on:

1. **Adopts** the agenda of its forty-seventh meeting; and
2. **Adopts also** the electronic voting system during its 47th meeting.

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CME/CR/2 (XLVII)

COMMUNICATION OF THE HOST COUNTRY KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

The Commission,

Having heard the communication of the host country of its 47th meeting, HE Mr. Ahmed bin Aqil Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the post-pandemic phase and the sector's resilience, as well as on the opening of the UNWTO Regional Office in Riyadh, the first of its kind in the region;

1. **Thanks** the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting the forty-seventh meeting;
 2. **Commends** the Kingdom's tourism strategy, which aims at raising the contribution of the tourism sector to the GDP;
 3. **Shares his opinion** on the need to work on increasing the sector's resilience and strength in time of crisis, and the importance of learning from the crisis to build a stronger sector, with a special focus on environmentally friendly tourism and making financial resources more sustainable through diversifying income and the return on investment; and
 4. **Congratulates** the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the establishment of the UNWTO Regional office in Riyadh and **looks forward** to further collaboration in the framework of the Commission to support and train countries of the region, coordinate policies and initiatives to promote tourism products and sustainable development, and stimulate investment.
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CME/CR/3(XLVII)

COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIR

Agenda item 2

The Commission,

Having heard the communication of the Chair of the UNWTO Commission for the Middle East, by HE Mr. Ahmad Abdulla Humaid Belhoul, Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and SMEs of the United Arab Emirates, on the important message of support that holding this first in-person regional meeting transmits towards consumers' confidence in the re-opening of tourism.

1. **Shares his opinion** on the importance of developing joint work in the framework of the Commission, especially during these unprecedented challenging times worldwide due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in order to enhance countries' strategies to address the impacts of the pandemic on tourism and enhance the recovery of this vital sector;
2. **Believes** this meeting will be the start of a new phase for the countries of the Middle East, and a platform for many initiatives, projects and proposals to support joint tourism action; and
3. **Invites** Member States to take advantage of UNWTO initiatives to address the impacts of the pandemic on the tourism sector and to develop the necessary tools and mechanisms for this, by strengthening cooperation between them.

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CME/CR/4 (XLVII)

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Agenda item 3

The Commission,

Having considered the Report of the Secretary-General on the Administration's vision and initiatives to address the effects of the pandemic globally and regionally, the main challenges of the tourism sector in the region and the priorities for its joint work within the Organization's programme of work;

Having heard with great interest the presentation made by UNWTO Secretary-General (Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili) on UNWTO Response to the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic to support the Members worldwide and in the region, in monitoring and evaluating the impacts of COVID-19 on international tourism, monitoring the imposed travel restrictions, directing and coordinating policies through the Global Tourism Crisis Committee and technical assistance to revive tourism and tourism security, managing risks and crises affecting the sector, and using digital technology applications in innovation and digital transformation, investments and entrepreneurship, education and employment, safe, secure and accessible travel, and social, cultural and environmental sustainability;

Having heard the presentation made by UNWTO Chief of Market Intelligence and Competitiveness (Ms. Sandra Carvao) on the Best Tourism Villages initiative and corresponding Startup Competition on Rural tourism;

1. **Congratulates** the Organization and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the person of the Secretary-General and HE the Saudi Minister of Tourism, for the establishment of the UNWTO Regional office in Riyadh;
 2. **Thanks** the Secretary-General for his comprehensive remarks on the Organization's priorities and vision, new developments in international tourism and its future prospects, worldwide and in the Middle East, as well as the organization's programme of work and **welcomes** the initiatives to recover and restart tourism, especially in light of the repercussions of the pandemic;
 3. **Commends** the work of the World Tourism Crisis Committee and UNWTO recommendations in supporting governments in developing policies to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism sector and accelerate the recovery, by providing incentives, preparing for tomorrow and building for the future;
 4. **Congratulates** the Secretary-General for the major awareness efforts delivered at the global level to alert global leaders on the heavy repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector and the need to coordinate the measures taken to alleviate the consequences of the pandemic;
 5. **Shares his opinion** on the importance of adapting the tourism sector - as it prepares for resumption and recovery in the region - to the challenges of safety and security, constant market changes, natural resource limits, innovation and digitization in order to maintain competitiveness and maximize the potential of the sector, creating opportunities labor and sustainable development;
 6. **Requests** the Secretary-General to continue his efforts, in light of the unprecedented global health, social and economic emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, to encourage innovation and digitization for the development of the tourism sector **encourages** Member States to make best use of the available resources, knowledge and expertise to restore the sector's right track and to communicate with the Organization regarding the use of technology and digital applications in innovating management, development and marketing systems, and harnessing tourism to support economic and social development;
 7. **Appreciates** the UNWTO Best Tourist Villages Initiative and **praises** the organization's efforts in promoting innovative and transformative approaches to the development of tourism in rural destinations that contribute to the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental – in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and **encourages** Member States to make best use of this initiative, which aims to identify, protect and promote the development of rural sites along with their landscapes, biodiversity and ecosystems, knowledge, cultural diversity, traditional social structure and way of life through tourism; and
 8. **Expresses** Members' support to the Secretary-General in his management of the Organization and his efforts in addressing the effects of the pandemic and in achieving the priorities set to support to Members in the recovery of their tourism sector and creating decent living opportunities for local communities and reinforcing its coordination with various institutions of the United Nations system.
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CME/CR/5 (XLVII)

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE GENERAL PROGRAMME OF WORK:
Regional Activities
Affiliate Members Activities
Agenda items 4.1 and 4.2**

The Commission,

Having considered the Organization's report on Member States and Affiliate Members activities in the region within the Organization's Programme of Work for the period 2020-2021,

Having Listened to the presentation made by the Regional Director for the Middle East (Ms. Basmah bint Abdulaziz Al-Mayman) on regional activities and the activities of Affiliate Members to mitigate the effects of the pandemic in the Middle East and to support Member States initiatives in monitoring and evaluating the impact of COVID-19 and the resumption of tourism;

Having taken note of the brief on the establishment of the UNWTO regional office of the in Riyadh;

1. **Adopts** the report and **commends** the quantity and quality of regional activities that have been implemented or planned, in implementation of the Organization's General Programme of Work for the period 2020-2021;
2. **Commends** the role of the Regional Office in meeting the specific needs of countries of the region in supporting countries' focus on tourism as an important source of income, creating job opportunities and diversifying their national economies, by supporting and implementing the organization's activities in the Middle East region and benefiting, in particular, from the image and size of the Organization's international presence and the existing network of partners in the Middle East;
3. **Calls upon** the Member States to intensify their communication with the Middle East Regional Department and to benefit from its various activities in order to enhance confidence in the tourism sector, make tourism resumption initiatives successful, secure an appropriate environment for investment in tourism projects, and enhance the sector's contribution to creating decent job opportunities, especially for young people, and developing local communities, especially in light of the ongoing challenges facing the Middle East region and the negative effects of the Corona pandemic;
4. **Urges** Member States to participate in the international events to be held within the framework of the Organization's Programme of Work during the second half of this year; and
5. **Encourages** Member States to enhance the role of the private sector by joining the UNWTO as Affiliate Members.

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CME/CR/6 (XLVII)

**RESULTS OF THE SURVEY ON MEMBERS' PRIORITIES FOR THE GENERAL
PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET FOR THE PERIOD 2022-2023**

Agenda item 5

The Commission,

Having heard the report presented online by the Chief of Members Relations (Mr. Beka Jakeli) from UNWTO Headquarters in Madrid, regarding the results of the survey on Members' Priorities,

1. **Commends** the valuable information provided and timely and relevant content and **appreciates** the special interest of UNWTO in identifying Members' priorities in view of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the tourism industry worldwide;

2. **Thanks** the Member States for their response to this survey - one of the highest participation records 92% - and **appreciates** the efforts of their governments in light of the unprecedented global health, social and economic emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges facing the sector; and

3. **Encourages** Member States to communicate regularly with UNWTO Secretariat to express their priorities and by making their contributions to these endeavours.

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CME/CR/7 (XLVII)

**DISCUSSION ON HARMONIZED PROTOCOLS
FOR THE MIDDLE EAST REGION**

Agenda item 6

The Commission,

Having heard the presentation of the Director of Innovation, Education and Investments at the World Tourism Organization (Ms. Natalia Bayona) on the harmonized protocols for the Middle East region;

Having heard also the interventions of their Excellencies the Ministers and Heads of delegations on the same harmonized protocols in their countries;

1. **Pays tribute to** the valuable and necessary information and **commends** the efforts of the Organization, in partnership with governments and some international organizations, to establish mechanisms and protocols that enable the management of the tourism movement while preserving public health;

2. **Expresses its appreciation** to the Member States for their response to this initiative **and appreciates** the efforts of their governments in light of the unprecedented state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges facing the sector;

3. **Thanks** the Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation for their valuable inputs and relevant comments in support of the Common Standards and Protocols, which can be summarized as follows:

Bahrain: The need for continuous communication and coordination with the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which launched a similar application (IATA Pass) to avoid duplication and wasting efforts.

Egypt: The need for coordination with the national health authorities.

Iraq: The need for coordination with the national health authorities as the protocols are subject to the conditions of each countries and the frequency and rythm of vaccinations. Therefore, the countries of the region are not at the same level in this field, and the criteria are subject to local considerations.

Kuwait: The need for continuous communication and coordination with IATA and to adopt the same application.

Jordan: The need to coordinating with the countries of the region to unify standards and take into account the challenges that face the ministries of health in our countries. The time has come to coordinate these applications and facilitate travel between Arab countries, which represents an opportunity for the Middle East to be the first region to adopt these protocols.

Lebanon: The need to unifying protocols and coordinating with IATA, while respecting local considerations.

Libya: The importance of unifying protocols, The need to coordination with airlines and IATA, respecting local considerations and the country's conditions to adapt with these protocols, while also taking into account the conditions and capabilities of travelers.

Oman: The need for continued consultation and coordination among the countries of the region to address the severe effects of the pandemic.

Qatar: The importance to agree on common protocols between the countries of the region.

Saudi Arabia: The need to follow one common approach that encourages tourists to visit more than one country. The importance of coordination between the countries of the region as one and the commitment to achieve comprehensive and sustainable recovery. Thus, the unified protocols will be an achievement for the Middle East and a model for other regions.

Syria: The need to coordinate with the national health authorities as they depend on the conditions of the countries, the rythm of vaccinations; and standards are subject to local considerations.

UAE: The need for coordination with the countries of the region and the existence of a unified framework while respecting the privacy of countries at their airports. The Commision's role is important to convey information to health ministers. Suggest an official statement from the Ministers of Tourism to the Ministers of Health to push for the adoption of these protocols.

Yemen: The need to reconciling health aspects with resuming tourism activity and coordination with the World Health Organization.

4. **Welcomes** the support of all Member States for the Harmonized Protocols and looks forward to the possibility of adopting one common approach so that the Harmonized Protocols will be an achievement for the Middle East and a model for other regions.

5. **Appreciates** the proposal of many Member States and the Secretary-General regarding the need to coordinate with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and focus on the most advanced and practical platform - the IATA Pass application- without the need to create more platforms, in order to facilitate travel and avoid repetition and confusion for tourists when using the application;

6. **Notes with interest** The need to coordination with the national health authorities, as the protocols are subject to the special conditions of each country and the rhythm and frequency of vaccinations, especially since the countries of the region are not at the same level in this field and the standards are subject to local considerations.

7. **Endorses the Chair's** proposal to issue a formal statement from the Ministers of Tourism to the Ministers of Health to push for the adoption of these Protocols;

8. **Thanks** the Secretary-General and **commends** the efforts of the Secretariat in supporting Member States and the industry in general to adapt and mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis during tourism trips, as well as work towards forming a more sustainable, comprehensive and resilient plan for this sector;

9. **Emphasizes** on the need to work together and move in a quick and balanced way with unified efforts to pave the way for recovery to restore tourism flow and advance recovery efforts, through coordinated protocols; to provide the necessary tranquility to resume tourism and restore the confidence of travelers; **encourages** Member States to continue cooperation between the various concerned ministries and coordination between the Public and Private sectors and work together to define a coordinated set of health protocols to maintain the safety of travelers and employees, to enable the aviation sector to recover, and to coordinate continuously with the Secretariat in this regard; and

10. **Affirms and urges** Member States to effectively use digital technology and innovation to provide a safe travel without difficulties in accordance with health, security and regulatory controls and standards.

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CME/CR/8 (XLVII)

**NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES TO THE VARIOUSXXIV
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OFFICES AND ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES**

Agenda item 7.1
(CME/47/ComReg_Rev1.)

The Commission,

Having considered the candidatures submitted to the Vice-Presidency of the General Assembly and membership of the Credentials Committee;

1. Nominates, **Iraq** (represented by HE Mr. Hassan Nadhem Abed Al-Essa, Minister of culture, Tourism and Antiquities to serve as Vice-President of the General Assembly (1 seat to be filled); and
2. Nominates **Bahrain** as its representative for the Credentials Committee (1 seats to be filled).

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CME/CR/9(XLVII)

**NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES TO REPRESENT
THE MIDDLE EAST REGION IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Agenda item 7.2
(CME/47/ComReg_Rev1.)

The Commission,

Having considered the nominations submitted to the Executive Council, and in the light of the consultations that took place among the participating delegations, and in the spirit of consensus;

Nominates **Bahrain** and the **United Arab Emirates** for membership in the Executive Council for the period 2021-2025.

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CME/CR/10 (XLVII)

**ELECTION OF THE CHAIR AND TWO VICE-CHAIRS
OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE PERIOD 2021-2023**

Agenda item 7.3

(CME/47/ComReg_Rev1.)

The Commission,

Having proceeded with the electronic vote with the following results:

- **Egypt (9 votes)**
- **Lebanon (2 votes)**

1. **Nominates Egypt** as its Chair (1 seat to be filled);
2. **Thanks the United Arab Emirates** for its dedicated work as Chair of the Commission and its commitment to support the Members of the Commission and the Organization in alleviating the impact of the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 and helping the tourism industry in its recovery;
3. **Nominates Lebanon and Iraq** as its 1st and 2nd Vice-Chairs respectively (2 seats to be filled); and
4. **Thanks Iraq and Yemen** for having performed the duties of Vice-Chairs during the period 2019-2021.

CME/CR/11 (XLVII)

NOMINATION OF THE HOST OF THE WORLD TOURISM DAY FOR 2023

Agenda item 8

The Commission,

Having heard the presentation made by HE Mr. Ahmed bin Akel Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism of Saudi Arabia to submit their candidature to host the World Tourism Day for 2023;

Supports unanimously this candidature and **congratulates** Saudi Arabia for its nomination to host World Tourism Day 2023.

CME/CR/12 (XLVII)

**PLACE AND DATE OF THE FORTY-EIGHT MEETING
OF THE UNWTO COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST**

Agenda item 9

The Commission,

Having recalled the candidature presented by Egypt during its 46th meeting;

Having heard the presentation made by HE Dr. Khaled Al Enany, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities of Egypt to submit their candidature to host the to host the 48th CME meeting; and

Thanks Egypt for presenting its candidature to host its 48th meeting and accepts this invitation meeting at a date and place to be determined later, in coordination with the Chair and the UNWTO Secretary General.

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CME/REC/13 (XLVII)

VOTE OF THANKS TO THE HOST COUNTRY AND TO THE ORGANIZATION

The Commission,

Having considered the various items on the agenda of its forty-seventh meeting in the best possible conditions of efficiency and comfort;

1. **Expresses** its utmost appreciation and thanks to the government and people of the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** for the warm hospitality and for the arrangements made for the holding of this meeting, and
2. **Thanks** the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization and his team for the excellent arrangements for the success of the meeting and for their continuous support to Member States.

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3. Elections results
SUMMARY OF MEMBERS REPRESENTATION IN THE UNWTO STATUTORY
ORGANS AND THEIR SUBSIDIARY BODIES

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

<i>Organ</i>	<i>Candidatures</i>
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (one)	Iraq
MEMBERS OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE (one)	Bahrain

MEMBERS TO REPRESENT THE REGION IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND ITS SUBSIDIARY ORGANS

<i>Organ</i>	<i>Candidatures</i> (2021-2025)
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (two seats)	Full Members Bahrain (renewal) Egypt (renewal) Iraq (new) UAE (new)

CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE CME

<i>Organ</i>	<i>Candidatures</i> (2021-2023)
CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION (one)	Egypt
VICE-CHAIRS OF THE COMMISSION (two) First Vice chair: Second Vice chair:	Lebanon Iraq

MEMBERS TO REPRESENT THE REGION IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND ITS SUBSIDIARY ORGANS

<i>Organ</i>	<i>Candidatures</i> (2021-2025)
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (two seats)	Bahrain (renewal) UAE (new)

4. قائمة المشاركين LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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