UNWTO Mayors Forum for Sustainable Urban Tourism

‘Tourism and the Future of Cities’

Porto, Portugal - 8-9 July 2021

Concept note

I. Background

Covid-19 has impacted significantly on tourism, a sector based on mobility and human interaction. In 2020, international tourist arrivals declined by 73% bringing the number of tourists traveling around the world to levels of 30 years ago.

Tourism contributes significantly to the socio-economic and cultural development of many cities and its surroundings. Yet, the growth of urban tourism in recent years was also raising important challenges in terms of the use of natural resources, socio-cultural impact, pressure on infrastructure, mobility, congestion management and relationship with host communities.

Cities have been at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic. They are also some of the most affected destinations when it comes to tourism. The near halt of the meetings industry, the restrictions on international travel and domestic movement and the closure of leisure activities has placed significant pressure on the sector. At the same time, there was a growing interest for local activities, changes in the use of urban spaces and a growing use of technology.

As stated by the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres “It is imperative that we rebuild the tourism sector in a safe, equitable and climate friendly manner”¹. Looking at the current crisis as an opportunity to rethink the role of tourism in the future of cities, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Ministry of Economy of Portugal and the Porto Municipality are co-organizing the 2021 UNWTO Mayors Forum for Sustainable Urban Tourism in Porto, Portugal on the 8-9 July 2021.

The UNWTO Mayors Forum for Sustainable Urban Tourism is an initiative launched in 2019 to bring together Mayors and relevant stakeholders and organizations from around the world who share a visionary leadership for tourism as a means of creating cities for all in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and particularly Goal 11 - “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.

II. Objectives

The 2021 Forum will discuss the impact of Covid-19 on tourism in cities and the role of tourism in the future of cities through the:

¹ Policy Brief, COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism, United Nations, August 2020
- exchange of ideas and best practices in urban tourism and destination management in the urban agenda by bringing together a wide-range of public and private sector stakeholders involved in the planning and management of cities;

- share learnings from the pandemic and their impact in the planning and management of tourism;

- promoting the integration of tourism into wider national and local urban development agenda;

- set recommendations for better policies and governance of urban tourism as we emerge into a post-covid-19 future;

- call to action reaffirming the commitment of governments and stakeholders to work towards building inclusive and sustainable cities for all

The Forum will address issues such as:

- The role of tourism in the New Urban Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs in a post covid-19 context.

- Actions to accelerate recovery and advance sustainable and inclusive tourism in the urban agenda.

- How to ensure urban tourism recovery prompts benefits for local communities and improves the quality of life of citizens while preserving authenticity.

- New and existing challenges – mobility, digital transformation, health, safety and security and new business models