

Members Plan Coordinated Restart of Tourism Across Asia and the Pacific

Madrid, Spain, 15 September 2021 - *Tourism leaders from across Asia and the Pacific have met to plan the sector's restart and recovery even as borders remain closed throughout the region.*

The 33rd Joint meeting of the World Tourism Organization's **Commission for East Asia and the Pacific** and its **Commission for South Asia** (14 September 2021) came on the back of a challenging year for the region. The first to feel the impacts of the pandemic, the tourism sector of Asia and the Pacific has also been the hardest hit, recording a 95% fall in international arrivals in the first five months of 2021.

Coordinated restart and recovery

With UNWTO data also showing that this region continues to have the largest proportion of destinations closed to tourists, the Member States taking part in the virtual meetings focused on the **coordination of policy measures and strategies** to accelerate the recovery of tourism activities in the region. These include the **phased lifting on travel restrictions** and the introduction of travel corridors. Looking ahead, Members also agreed on the importance of upgrading the skills of the tourism labour force, as well as **embracing innovation** and digital transformation.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "The Asia and Pacific region has a proven record as a dynamic tourism destination. With the right policy measures and strong coordination, destinations can start safely welcoming back international visitors, thereby allowing tourism to deliver on its potential as a driver of recovery and inclusive growth."

Elections for the Future

The meetings attracted around 120 participants from 25 of UNWTO's 29 Member States in the region under the chairmanship of Malaysia and the Maldives. Ahead of the 24th Session of the UNWTO General Assembly (30 November – 3 December 2021, Marrakesh, Morocco) the meeting concluded with **elections and nominations** for positions within key UNWTO bodies.

India and Iran were nominated to represent South Asia on the UNWTO Executive Council; **Cambodia and Maldives** were nominated to represent the region as Vice-Presidents of the 24th General Assembly, while **Samoa and Bhutan** will serve the members on the Credentials Committee.

Malaysia and the Maldives were nominated as Chairpersons to serve their Commissions for a second term, with **Fiji and Japan** appointed to play the role of Vice-Chairs for the Commission for East Asia and the Pacific, while **Bangladesh and Iran** will serve as Vice-Chairs for the Commission for South Asia. Finally, **Maldives** was nominated as the venue for the next Joint Meeting of the two Commissions (CAP and CSA) in 2022, and **Indonesia** was endorsed as the host of World Tourism Day 2022.

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