

## Winners of UNWTO Students' League Announced

**Madrid, Spain, 30 September 2021** - *Students from around the world have been recognized for ideas to make tourism more responsible and sustainable. The 2021 Global UNWTO Students' League Competition focused on addressing the issue of plastics pollution within the sector, as well as maximizing tourism's contributions to rural development.*

The competition attracted over 1,000 students. From these, 155 teams, representing 124 educational institutions in 45 different countries put forward their ideas. As well as being judged on how well their idea would contribute to a specific Sustainable Development Goal, the students were also assessed on the feasibility of their solutions and on their level of teamwork.

The eight **winning solutions** included works of art, calls to action, Instagram and other digital marketing campaigns, and potential strategies to help both destinations and tourism accommodation providers reduce plastic waste and consumption. Several of the ideas submitted to the competition have already been picked up and implemented by stakeholders across the tourism sector.

### Youth empowerment for tourism's future

The UNWTO Students League aims to empower and motivate tourism students by giving them real-time experience working in creating and implementing innovative and sustainable solutions for the challenges that the sector is facing.

At the final, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "The tourism of tomorrow must be inclusive, sustainable and embrace local values. The UNWTO Students League is a unique chance for students from around the world to help lead this change."

This initiative bridges the gap between students' education and training and the realities of the sector. It also enables young people to enter the labour market as highly qualified and skilled professional.

## Student Testimonials

*"From the moment that I decided to join this competition, I came into the world of SDGs. It is incredible to me that tourism has an intersection with so many different topics, ...a sector that is amazing not just because of what it is about but also because of the many things that make it up.*

**Vildan Soguktas**, from Kinawa Middle School, Michigan, US" (Rural – Middle School)

*"...history has proven and will continue to prove that natural disasters or wars, including the pandemic, will never prevent people from travelling freely... As a team of teenagers who love travelling, we shall do our best for a better world!"*

**Xin Tong**, Ma'anshan No. 7 Middle School, Anhui Province (Rural Challenge, Middle School 11-13)

*We learnt a lot about working together as a team to tackle plastics pollution. As travel and tourism students, it helped us comprehend the scope about this problem. Thank you for this incredible opportunity.*

**Team Thaajuddeen**, Thaajuddeen School, Maldives (Plastics Challenge, High-School 14-18)

*"Being able to find new ideas to develop a tourist offer and a positioning for Tabant was an incredible experience for us! Thanks to UNWTO for giving us this opportunity".*

**Lucia Tucci & Salvatore Cavallaro**, Team Off Beat - Master in Economia del Turismo, Bocconi University (Rural Challenge -Undergraduates)

## The winners are as follows:

### Tourism and Rural development Challenge

- **Rural Middle School – 11-13**  
Ma'anshan n°7 Middle School, China
- **Rural High School – 14-18**  
Team Um Mabbad Alkuzia School, Um Mabbad Basic Education Girls School, Oman
- **Rural Undergraduates**  
Team Climate Crew, NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands
- **Rural Masters**  
Team Off Beat, Università Bocconi - Master in Economia del Turismo, Italy

## Plastics Pollution Challenge

- **Plastics Middle School – 11-13**  
International School of Choueifat-Muscat, Oman
- **Plastics High School – 14-18**  
Team LBPC, Collège Notre Dame du Mont Carmel Lebanon
- **Plastics Undergraduates**  
Team Walkie Talkie, RMIT University Vietnam , Vietnam
- **Plastics Masters**  
Team Swift Action, Beijing International Studies University, China

## Sector-wide support

The UNWTO Students League was made possible thanks to the support and experience from partners the Culinary Tourism Alliance, Digital Tourism Think Tank ,Eurecat, Exo Foundation, Google, Iberia, Instagram, International Trade Center, NH Hotels International, Rusticae, Tress4Humanity, Verne Tourism Experts, and the Ministry of Tourism of Morocco, as well the Plastics Initiative signatories: Bharhka Countryside Cottage Resorts, Chumbe Island Coral Park Zanzibar, Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative, Dark Sky Association, El Rio Foundation, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Fundación Banco Santander, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, Guava Amenities, Hostelword Group, Indonesian Waste Platform, Positive Impact Forever, ProAmpac, Radisson Hotels, Sustainable First, Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, University of Tasmania, and UNEP