

UNWTO in Kuala Lumpur: First Regional Conference on Women's Empowerment in Tourism

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 18 November 2021 - *UNWTO's Members from across Asia and the Pacific came together to advance the tourism sector's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment.*

The UNWTO Regional Conference on the Empowerment of Women in Tourism in Asia and the Pacific – the first event on the topic organized by UNWTO jointly with Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture – brought together more than 500 key virtual participants in addition to around 100 local in-person stakeholders. Alongside UNWTO experts, government policymakers, UN Women representatives, high-level representatives of women's associations and NGOs, joined leading academics to address some of the key challenges and opportunities for women in tourism in the region.

In Asia and the Pacific, women make up 53% of the tourism workforce. However, they remain concentrated in lower paid-positions and tend to have poorer working conditions. As in other regions of the world, high-level and leadership positions seem to be the sole prerogative of men. The aim of this conference was to contribute to international efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) on gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly in light of how the pandemic has worsened the socio-economic situation of the female tourism workforce in the region.

In her welcome and opening remarks, H.E. Dato' Sri Nancy Shukri, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia reinforced this main objective of the conference and said "As part of efforts to advance a more inclusive recovery for the tourism sector which is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and particularly SDG 5 on gender equality, I believe this conference will provide us with deep insights on strategies and the future prospects for women in tourism in the Asia-Pacific region."

The discussions of the conference focused on the six thematic pillars of UNWTO's Action Plan on Women in Tourism. These include women's employment and leadership; entrepreneurship; education and training for the realities of post-COVID19 tourism; and data and statistics for an inclusive recovery. Based on these thematic areas, the conference explored how tourism's immense potential for advancing women's economic empowerment can be further enhanced through the implementation of the right recovery policies and strategies.