

UNWTO Points Tourism towards a Greener, Inclusive Future at General Assembly

Madrid, Spain, 2 December 2021 - *Innovation, youth empowerment and tourism and rural development took centre stage as Spanish Prime Minister Sánchez Pérez-Castejón joined UNWTO for the third day of its General Assembly in Madrid.*

With the opening days of the most important meeting in global tourism focused on UNWTO's response to the impacts of the pandemic and uniting Members behind its leadership and Programme of Work, the third day looked ahead to a more sustainable and inclusive future for the sector. Addressing a special Thematic Session, "Building for the Future: Innovation, Education and Rural Development", Prime Minister Sánchez recognized the importance of the sector for providing opportunities outside of cities, both in Spain and worldwide, while also reaffirming his Government's support for UNWTO's mission.

Also addressing delegates, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "If we are serious about 'leaving nobody behind', then we must get serious about innovation, about education and about advancing tourism as a tool for rural development. That means empowering youth, supporting tourism talent, and also giving the best solutions the political and financial support they need to scale up and transform our sector."

Ministers Advance Shared Vision for Sector

The session included a Ministerial Debate on 'Politics to Foster Tourism for Rural Development', with insights and inputs from the Ministers of Tourism for Colombia, Jamaica, Malaysia, Paraguay, Slovenia, Tanzania, Spain and Turkey. This was followed by a roundtable on entrepreneurship and innovation in innovation. Representing Members States were Ministers of Tourism from Chile, Greece, Japan, Jordan, Nigeria, Portugal and the United Arab Emirates, while the private sector was represented by winners of the UNWTO Global Rural Tourism Startup Competition. Concluding, a discussion on empowering the tourism leaders of the future, with reference to the UNWTO Students' League, featured contributions from the Ministers of Tourism for Bulgaria, Lebanon, Maldives and Oman, as well as students themselves.

As well as looking to the future, the General Assembly also celebrated destinations that are already leading the way in making tourism a pillar of rural development and opportunity. From hundreds of entries, 44 villages from 32 countries were named as Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO.

Uzbekistan to host 25th General Assembly

In addition to the Thematic Session, the third day of the 24th Session of the UNWTO General Assembly once again saw Members meet to discuss and approve the Programme of Work for the next two years. On the agenda was the UNWTO leadership's determination to move the Secretariat closer to Member States, as exemplified by the first Regional Office for the Middle East, opened in June this year and ratified by Member States at the General Assembly. Several Members expressed a wish to host future Regional Offices and so serve as hubs for UNWTO's work in their regions.

Members voted for Uzbekistan to host the 25th UNWTO General Assembly, scheduled to be held in 2023 and agreed to examining plans to create a new taskforce to 'Redesign Tourism for the Future'. Additionally, Bali in Indonesia was confirmed as host for World Tourism Day 2022, to be held around the timely theme of 'Rethinking Tourism', while the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were similarly confirmed as the host country for World Tourism Day 2022, to be held around the year of 'Tourism for Green Investments'.

The General Assembly also fulfilled its obligation with regards to elections, with Member States supporting nominations for new members to serve on the World Committee on Tourism Ethics. Furthermore, 17 countries were confirmed to sit on the UNWTO Executive Council from 2021 to 2025, with Puerto Rico to serve as the representative of Affiliate Members.

Related Links:

[General Assembly - Twenty-fourth session](#)

[24th UNWTO General Assembly | Thematic Session](#)

[UNWTO Announces List of 'Best Tourism Villages' 2021](#)

[UNWTO Students' League](#)