UNWTO and the GSMA join forces to improve digital skills of underserved communities in tourism

Madrid, Spain, 3 December 2021: The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the GSMA, the global association unifying the mobile ecosystem, have announced a partnership to promote the upskilling of people in underserved communities, engaged in tourism. With their combined expertise in responsible tourism and mobile connectivity, the UNWTO and GSMA will help marginalised groups, particularly women and indigenous peoples, provide new tourism services to improve their livelihoods.

The partnership has been developed as part of the GSMA-led Digital Declaration, which unites CEOs from across industry sectors who are committed to acting ethically in the digital era and delivering what matters most to digital citizens, industry, and governments.

Enabling digital entrepreneurship

The GSMA and UNWTO recently provided the first training sessions. Focused on digital marketing and delivered in Chiapas and Veracruz in Mexico, these workshops have helped local women acquire new skills to identify new audiences and promote their artisan textiles online.

The workshops form part of the UNWTO Weaving the Recovery project. This project is delivered with partners from Mexico, including NGO Impacto and Centro de las Artes Indígenas (CAI), as well as the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA).

Currently millions of indigenous women across the globe require training that could enable them to harness the potential offered by online channels, develop their business plans, and partake in cultural exchange with their peers by using new technology.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General, UNWTO, said: “The digital transformation of tourism ensures that the social and economic benefits it offers are enjoyed more widely than ever before. UNWTO is happy to partner with GSMA to reach communities and individuals that stand to benefit most from the restart and recovery of our sector.”

Mats Granryd, Director General, GSMA, added: “As the Covid-19 pandemic showed, people rely on mobile technology and internet access across all aspects of their lives. However, the pandemic has also shown the need to bridge the digital divide, particularly for people who do not know how to use the internet. By collaborating with the UNWTO, we’ll help to create an environment so that people in underserved communities will be able to learn new digital skills that will help them run their businesses.”
According to data from a report jointly presented by UNWTO and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the crash in international tourism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic could cause losses of more than $4 trillion to global GDP, affecting the industry itself and those closely linked to it. It is hoped that initiatives such as this partnership can help reinvigorate the tourism sector and power a strong socioeconomic recovery.

Both the Weaving the Recovery and the Digital Declaration projects were featured at the Paris Peace Forum 2021 in November, which besides gathering 45 heads of states and governments, also promoted UNWTO and GSMA initiatives for addressing global governance issues.

The future UNWTO and GSMA cooperation will also focus on capacity building related to digital inclusion and e-commerce which has become instrumental for local communities and creative industries in the recovery process.

About the GSMA

The GSMA is a global organization unifying the mobile ecosystem to discover, develop and deliver innovation foundational to positive business environments and societal change. Our vision is to unlock the full power of connectivity so that people, industry, and society thrive. Representing mobile operators and organizations across the mobile ecosystem and adjacent industries, the GSMA delivers for its members across three broad pillars: Connectivity for Good, Industry Services and Solutions, and Outreach. This activity includes advancing policy, tackling today's biggest societal challenges, underpinning the technology and interoperability that make mobile work, and providing the world's largest platform to convene the mobile ecosystem at the MWC and M360 series of events.

We invite you to find out more at gsma.com.

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