Global Tourism Plastics Initiative Releases First Progress Report and Welcomes More Signatories

Madrid, 17 December 2021 - The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative has welcomed a further 21 signatories, taking the total number past 110. The new signatories have been announced alongside the launch of a first annual report, which makes clear the significant progress made in tackling plastics pollution in tourism over the past year.

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Accor, Club Med, Hong-Kong and Shanghai Hotels, Iberostar, Melco, Six Senses have all reported continuous efforts to implement their commitments to tackle plastic pollution. Together, they have eliminated over 108 million plastic items and packaging in 2020, totaling around 804 metric tons.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “In just one year, the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative has made a real impact. Together, signatories have cut their use of plastic by 800 metric tons, equivalent to 27 large shipping containers full of plastic. I congratulate all those businesses and destinations for their commitment and welcome the 21 newest signatories to the Initiative – a clear sign that tourism is working hard to become more sustainable, even in times of crisis.”

Signatories report plastics progress

deSter, a member of Gategroup and the leading supplier to the aviation, hospitality and foodservice industries has also reported progress, for instance by discontinuing the launch of new products with non-recyclable materials; working on fiber-based technologies and closed loop recycling pilots with customers; and developing new designs.

“We are delighted to have joined the Global Tourism Plastic Initiative through our Bye Bye Plastics program: Club Med has already removed on a global scale disposable plastic items such as cups, straws, cutlery, plates as well as individual plastic packaging from shower gel, shampoo and lotion and from other in-room accessories. We are now aiming to remove single use plastic accessories from our rooms and festive events as well as reducing by up to 50% the use of plastic water bottles in 2024 (compared to 2019),” said Florian Duprat, Sustainability manager at Club Med.

“We are pleased to have been able to formalize our goals and progress in the global commitment of the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative report. It gives us the opportunity...
to demonstrate our commitment to developing more sustainable solutions. And, more importantly, by being part of a coordinated action plan with other signatories, we can be sure that we are moving the needle to stop plastic pollution,” said Philippe De Naeyer, Director Sustainability at deSter.

The full report is available online and is also linked to the annual report of the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment led by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, providing its Tourism chapter (see page 12). A broader reporting mechanism which would allow additional stakeholders that are signatories (e.g. SMEs) to report progress on the implementation of their commitments will also soon be made available.

More sector-wide commitment

Since the last announcement of signatories in July 2021, the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative has officially welcomed 21 new signatories bringing the total of organizations that have committed to implement circular economy of plastics in the tourism sector to 113.

Among the 21 new signatories, the Initiative welcomes 4 accommodation companies (Alila Villas Uluwatu, JJ’s Hostel Mirissa, Phaea Resorts, Sudima Hotels), 7 tour operators (Adventuretects LLC, Europamundo, Evaneos, Secret Scotland Tours, SEE Turtles, Travel.Bhutan, Turama Pacific Travel Group), 9 supporting organizations (arcenciel, Blue Community, Clewat Ltd, The Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO, Jaya House River Park Siem Reap, Lombok Tourism Polytechnic, Natufagus Consulting, Union of International Mountain Leader Associations (UIMLA), Worldwide Association of Diving Instructors) and 1 destination (Azerbaijan Tourism Board (ATB)). These signatories have set concrete targets around the elimination of unnecessary and problematic plastics, the introduction of reuse models and work on value chain level to improve recyclability.

A common goal for tourism

The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative unites the tourism sector behind a common vision to address the root causes of plastic pollution. It is led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative was endorsed by the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization at its 114th meeting held on 1st December 2021 during the UNWTO General Assembly in Madrid, encouraging Member States to take part in the fight against plastic pollution.

Related links:

The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative

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