

UNWTO Returns to Geneva as World Begins to Open Up

Madrid, Spain, 21 February 2022 - *The Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) will be in Geneva this week for high-level talks focused on the restart of tourism as restrictions on travel are eased in many parts of the world.*

Strong Relationship with WHO

UNWTO last undertook an official visit to the home city of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020, just one day before COVID-19 was officially declared a pandemic. Now, as Switzerland joins growing numbers of countries in lifting or easing travel restrictions, UNWTO is back in Geneva for a week of meetings with key partners.

On Tuesday (22 February) Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili will meet with WHO Director-General Dr. Thedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to discuss shared actions and priorities as the world begins opening up again. The two UN agencies will discuss the need for the continued easing of restrictions, having repeatedly warned against their ineffectiveness and the damage that blanket bans on mobility can have on economic and social wellbeing. Talks will also focus on UNWTO and WHO's shared vision for clearer, more consistent rules and regulations concerning tourism and health, with the aim of restoring trust in international travel and kickstarting recovery.

Deepening ties with the private sector

Strengthening ties with key private sector and civil society partners is crucial in the current circumstances. Secretary-General Pololikashvili will meet with the Director-General of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Willie Walsh, as well as with Pierfrancesco Vago, Chairman and CEO of the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). These meetings will be followed by an official visit to the headquarters of UEFA. Here, the sporting body's President Aleksander Čeferin will sign a first-ever agreement with UNWTO aimed at promoting sports tourism as a driver of positive change and making the sector more inclusive and resilient.

Key partners in Switzerland

Against the backdrop of Switzerland announcing its plans to significantly ease restrictions on incoming travel, the UNWTO delegation will meet with Eric Jakob, Ambassador of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), whose brief includes tourism policy, as well as with Martin Nydegger, CEO of Switzerland Tourism. Highlighting Switzerland's commitment to sustainable tourism, the UNWTO delegation will visit Gruyères. The medieval destination was named as a UNWTO Best Tourism Village at the 24th General Assembly in 2021, and this will be the first official visit to one of the locations recognized for their effective use of tourism as a protector of heritage, and as a driver of growth and opportunity. The visit will be hosted by the Mayor of Gruyères Jean-Pierre Doutaz.

In line with UNWTO's focus on tourism jobs and education, the leadership will also tour the campus of Hotel Institute Montreux (HIM), part of Swiss Education Group, and Glion Institute of Higher Education, part of Sommet Education. Secretary-General Pololikashvili will meet with Yong Shen, CEO of Swiss Education Group, Ulrika Björklund, Dean of HIM, in Montreux, and Benoit-Etienne Domenget, CEO of Sommet Education, in Glion, and be welcomed to the new UNWTO International Centre Switzerland, located at the Bella Vista Institute of Higher Education in Altdorf, with its first dual-degree tourism program with HIM in Montreux.

In another first, UNWTO will be addressing the UN Press Briefing at UN Geneva, providing an overview of the outcomes of the official visit and highlights on the tourism for development agenda for 2022, advanced by UNWTO.

Related Links :

["Blanket Travel Restrictions Don't Work": UNWTO Adds its Voice to WHO Statement](#)

[UNWTO to Open International Tourism Education and Training Hub in Switzerland](#)