

“Work Together and Make Tourism Pillar of Peace”, UNWTO Addresses EU Ministers

Dijon, France, 18 March 2022 – *UNWTO has been recognized for asserting the values of tourism and promoting the sector as a pillar of peace and recovery. At an informal meeting of EU Tourism Ministers, the French Presidency of the European Council welcomed the leadership of UNWTO and noted the strong unity of the sector in the face of an historic challenge.*

Addressing delegates, the UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili warned of the ‘triple threat’ of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency and war in Europe. Since the start of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, UNWTO has added its voice to the strong condemnation of the wider United Nations system and other international bodies. In Dijon, representatives of the French Presidency were joined by Ministers from across the region in commending the unequivocal stance taken by the UNWTO leadership.

Tourism as a beacon of peace and hope

Secretary-General Pololikashvili stressed that, in the face of such challenges, “tourism has an active role to play in reasserting our shared values and promoting peace”, adding that it is a role the sector is fulfilling. “Just as we did during the pandemic, we are seeing the best of tourism, and this support will grow in size, scope and power over the days ahead,” he added.

As the Ministers of Tourism of the 27 EU states met in person for the first time since the start of the pandemic, UNWTO also made the case for enhanced cooperation and solidarity. “We are stronger together,” Secretary-General Pololikashvili told the conference, which also featured the participation of European Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton. All of the delegates were urged to recognize the key role that the restart of tourism will play in promoting international solidarity and in providing hope for millions of people in every global region.

Tourism's Restart Underway

UNWTO has welcomed the steady lifting and easing of the travel restrictions introduced in response to the pandemic. As of 15 March, seven countries around the world have completely lifted their COVID-19 related restrictions, fully in line with the recommendations of UNWTO and the World Health Organization (WHO), and Ministers of the 27 EU member states were urged not lose focus on the challenges still standing in the way of the sector's recovery.

The UNWTO Secretary-General called on the EU governments to provide tourism with the support it needs to make a difference, while also commending the recovery plans of many EU member states. "Targeted help for tourism will benefit every level of the sector, most notably small and medium-sized businesses and individual workers", which represent up to 80% of the tourism sector, he said. He also made clear that now is the time for tourism to step up its climate action commitments, with cooperation again cited as the essential foundation for building a more sustainable and resilient sector.

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