World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Members Vote to Suspend Russia

Madrid, Spain, 27 April 2022 - The Russian Federation has been suspended from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), losing with immediate effect its rights and privileges as part of the United Nations specialized agency.

Meeting for a first extraordinary UNWTO General Assembly, Members debated the suspension of Russia from the Organization, as decided by the UNWTO Executive Council at its emergency meeting last month. The Russian delegation declined to step up and defend its position, and instead announced its withdrawal from UNWTO before the debate took place.

The Assembly voted in favor of suspension, far exceeding the two-third majority required. The decision is effective immediately, while voluntary withdrawal is only effective one year after a Member submits an official communication through the appropriate channels.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “UNWTO's Members have sent a clear message: Tourism is a pillar of peace and international friendship, and Members of UNWTO must uphold these values or face consequences, with no exceptions. This emergency General Assembly shows that Russia’s actions are indefensible and contrary to the very principles of UNWTO and of international governance.”

Loss of rights and privileges

In total, 99 countries were represented in Madrid. According to Article 3 of the Statutes, all Members commit to developing tourism with a “view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity, and universal prospect for, and observance of, human rights”.

Effective immediately, the Russian Federation will not be able to exercise the rights or enjoy the privileges of UNWTO membership. This means it will not be able to receive services from the Organization, including Technical Assistance, nor will the Russian Federation be able to participate in any UNWTO meetings or events, be permitted to put forward any candidates to serve on UNWTO's statutory bodies, or to vote in elections to UNWTO organs or to propose a candidate to serve as Secretary-General.
Fulfilling Members’ requests

The first emergency session of the General Assembly was convened at the request of six Members and at the instruction of the UNWTO Executive Council. The UNWTO Secretariat then provided a comprehensive report to the General Assembly for Member States to take an informed decision in relation to Russian Federation’s suspension from membership, following the Organization’s Statutes.

The UNWTO Statutes state that any Member State may be suspended if two-thirds of their fellow Members believe them to be persisting in a policy that is contrary to the fundamental aim of the Organization. A majority of two-thirds of Full Members present and voting at the General Assembly is required for a motion for suspension of membership to pass. Suspension is temporary and may be lifted, though only by the General Assembly and following the same procedure.

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First Extraordinary Session of the UNWTO General Assembly

UNWTO Basic Documents, Volume I - Statutes, Rules of Procedure, Agreements