

UNWTO Commission for the Americas

Sixty-seventh meeting
Punta del Este, Uruguay, 19 May 2022, 10:00hrs – 17:00hrs
Provisional agenda item 8

CAM/67/8
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Policy Discussion: “Accelerating Recovery and Building Resilience”

Concept Note & Guidelines

The travel and tourism sectors have become the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies have shown that most tourist-destination countries in the Americas continue to experience the heavy economic impact of the pandemic. The impact has been particularly disproportionated for MSMEs and vulnerable groups such as women and youth.

UNWTO data shows that international tourist arrivals to the Americas declined 18% in 2021 compared to 2020 and were 62% below 2019, though with a clear improvement from September onwards.

Based on the latest available data, global international tourist arrivals more than doubled (+130%) in January 2022 compared to 2021 - the 18 million more visitors recorded worldwide in the first month of this year equals the total increase for the whole of 2021.

While these figures confirm the positive trend already underway last year, the pace of recovery in January was impacted by the emergences of the Omicron variant and the re-introduction of travel restrictions in several destinations. Following the 71% decline of 2021, international arrivals in January 2022 remained 67% below pre-pandemic levels.

During its 67th meeting, in Punta del Este on May 19th 2022, the UNWTO Regional Commission for the Americas will host a Policy Discussion on the recovery of the tourism sector in the region, with participation of ministers, high-level officials, key tourism private sector stakeholders and Organizations from the region.

This policy discussion aims to share best policies to accelerate recovery and build resilience for the travel and tourism sectors in the Americas. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss the ongoing process of lifting travel restrictions and how governments, DMOs, and private sector can reassess their markets and work on adjusting their strategies to recover demand, adjust to changing consumer needs and the sector’s digital and green transformation.

Recently, a growing number of countries around the world have started easing their rules for international travel in line with WHO’s latest recommendations for safe international mobility, which highlight the ineffectiveness of blanket restrictions in controlling virus transmissions. Such a trend is also consistent with UNWTO’s repeated warnings of the great social, economic and development harm of restrictions.

To open again, safely and responsibly, and allow tourism to deliver on its unique potential as a driver of recovery and development, all measures applied to international travelers should

be based on risk assessments. As countries ease travel restrictions, health must remain a key priority. By basing their decisions on evidence and a risk-based approach adapted to their specific context, countries can find the right balance between keeping people safe, protecting livelihoods and the economy, and keeping borders open.

The discussion will focus on the following topics:

1. The Future of Tourism in Americas

- **Short terms prospects** in view of the current lifting of travel restrictions and pandemic evolution as well as ongoing geopolitical situation.
- **Main challenges and actions** needed to accelerate recovery (labour shortages; consumer confidence; volatility of the market, digital transformation, etc)
- **Lessons learned** and how to incorporate them in future policies and strategies

2. Making Recovery Inclusive and Resilient

- **Women Empowerment.** What policies and strategies to support women employment, gender equality and empowerment given the disproportionate loss of employment suffered by women, as well as the high proportion of women workers within tourism and their concentration in lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs¹
- **Supporting MSMEs.** The current situation of MSMEs in tourism, current and future needs and support policies for resilience and transformation with a focus on digitalization and skills development.
- **Empowering local communities.** Many communities with a high level of tourism weight in their economy has been strongly affected. How to recover and provide them tools for recovery and adapt to consumer changes (governance, skills, digitalization).

3. Tourism for Peace

- Peace and mutual understanding are essential pillars for tourism recovery.
- Tourism is the main bridge for building understanding. It has a unique ability to promote peace between and among peoples everywhere.

The Secretary-General will open the discussion and invite Members States, private sector and international organizations to share their views on the above issues considering their own scope of actions but also what they would consider important from the other stakeholders.

Participants are invited to answer the following questions in their interventions

1. What are your short-term prospects for tourism in your country / the region?
2. What are your priorities for recovery and resilience?
3. What are the main obstacles to accelerate recovery and build resilience?

The Policy Discussion will be structured as an interactive debate moderated by Mr. Marcelo Risi, Chief of Communications.

Speakers are not expected to make formal presentations or to use PowerPoint slides and kindly invited to keep their interventions within the five minutes time limit.

¹ <https://www.unwto.org/news/new-guidelines-put-women-s-empowerment-at-heart-of-tourism-s-restart>