

Background Note

CE/116/Thematic Session
Madrid, 19 May 2022
Original: English

“Tourism Futures – New Governance and Advocacy”

Tourism has never been more relevant. Yet the sector’s potential as a driver of change and source of inspiration is nowhere near being fully realized. As part of the UNWTO Executive Council (7-8 June 2022, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), “Tourism Futures – New Governance and Advocacy” will explore the challenges and opportunities of tourism governance and communications in the post-pandemic era, and in the face of multiple crises. Now is the time to reimagine tourism: to build a new governance structure based on enhanced cooperation and new financing models. Alongside this, using effective communications to raise tourism’s visibility outside of the sector itself will help position it as an essential pillar of growth and development.

Background

International tourist arrivals at the start of 2022 were double the level of 2021. In some regions, arrivals are already at, or even above, pre-pandemic levels. The lifting of any remaining travel restrictions, alongside rising consumer confidence, will be important drivers for the sector’s recovery, bringing hope to many millions of people.

Tourism’s gradual restart comes as recognition of the sector’s importance has never been higher. In May 2022, the United Nations General Assembly hosted its first debate on tourism, highlighting its key role on inclusive growth and development. At the same time, tourism is on the agenda of governments and of international organizations in every global region. And among the wider public, tourism is also increasingly recognized as far more than a leisure activity but instead as a unique and powerful provider of decent livelihoods and an opportunity for sustainable development.

The pandemic showed tourism’s relevance, but also exposed where the sector could do better. Now, UNWTO is calling for a rethink of tourism governance and an elevation of tourism’s visibility, to build greater resilience against future shocks and to raise wider awareness among the public and decision makers of the importance of building a tourism that works for everyone.

Concept

Held as part of the UNWTO Executive Council, this Thematic Session will provide a high-level platform to assess and rethink tourism governance, advocacy and communications in 2022 and beyond.

The event will feature two distinct sessions. The first “Towards a new tourism governance: Lessons learned for a resilient future” will welcome speakers from inside and outside the sector, including Ministers of Tourism from every global region, and high-level representatives of international organizations, including from within the United Nations system.

In the “Raising Tourism’s Visibility” session, Ministerial speakers will be joined by leading figures from online and broadcast media, marketing and business. The session will analyse the perception of tourism and explore ways to boost political and public recognition of the sector and the benefits it can deliver.

Objectives and Intended Outputs

The Thematic Session will challenge participants to think big and reimagine what might be possible for tourism governance, funding and advocacy. The event will provide a platform to debate key topics for the future of tourism, including:

- How can we learn from the lessons of the pandemic and enhance international cooperation and joined-up models of governance?
- How can we introduce new models of financing to deliver the investment needed to make tourism's transformation possible?
- The pandemic made tourism's importance clear: How do we build on this momentum and continue to raise the visibility of the sector?
- How have tourism's values changed? And how can communications reflect this, with a greater emphasis on inclusivity and sustainability?