

## **As Asia and Pacific Opens Up, Leaders Look to Innovative and Resilient Tourism**

**Male, Maldives, 15 June 2022** - *Tourism leaders from across Asia and the Pacific have placed building resilience and embracing innovation at the heart of the sector's restart and sustainable future.*

The 34th Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia (34th CAP-CSA), was held as destinations across the region begin welcoming back international tourists. The region was hit first and hit hardest by the pandemic's impact on tourism as many countries maintained strict restrictions on travel. Now, as UNWTO data confirms a 64% increase in international arrivals in the first quarter of 2022 compared to 2021, the high-level meeting of sector leaders identified the key challenges and opportunities ahead.

### **UNWTO's Work in the Region**

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili provided an overview of tourism trends and statistics, both for the region and globally, followed by an update on the Organization's work in the months since the previous Joint Commission meeting (hosted virtually by Spain in 2021). He stressed the importance of working together to lift travel restrictions, with coordination key to restarting tourism and for restoring confidence in international travel. "For many millions of people across Asia and the Pacific, tourism is an essential lifeline. Its return is vital and must be based around the pillars of inclusion and sustainability, for the benefit of all", he said.

The meeting was the first in-person gathering of the CAP- CSA for two years and brought together representatives of 19 Member States, as well as from UNWTO's network of Affiliate Members. Welcoming delegates, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Minister of Tourism of the Maldives and Chair of the Joint Meeting, added: "Though the road to recovery is still uncertain and many challenges remain, global coordination through similar platforms will open up the opportunity to build back more comprehensively towards a sustainable, inclusive and resilient tourism sector for the future."

### **Resilience through Innovation**

The 34th CAP- CSA was held in the Maldives as the country celebrated 50 years as an international tourism destination. Against the backdrop of the Golden Jubilee, the Ministry of Tourism of the Maldives and UNWTO also partnered to host a Ministerial

Roundtable on Tourism Resilience through Innovation and Digitalization in Asia and the Pacific. Recognizing the vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic, the discussion explored ways in which new technology and new ideas can help better protect tourism against shocks including future pandemics as well as extreme weather events.

Concluding the joint meeting, Member States voted to hold the next gathering in Cambodia in the first semester of 2023. On the back of the high-level meeting, UNWTO will host a two-day Global Summit on Community-based Tourism, bringing public and private sector experts together to focus on the potential of gastronomy tourism, agrotourism and community-based tourism for sustainable and inclusive development.

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