

UNWTO and Morocco Partner to Support 10,000 Tourism MSMEs go Digital

Marrakesh, Morocco, 29 November 2022 – UNWTO is stepping up its commitment to make Micro, Small and Medium-Enterprises agents of transformation for the tourism sector.

Against the backdrop of its Executive Council in Marrakesh, the United Nations specialized agency outlined plans to support **10,000 Moroccan MSMEs** benefit from digitalization. The joint action plan, developed alongside the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism, was announced at the start of a special Thematic Session on “SMEs and Talent: Transforming Tourism”.

Small businesses ‘tourism’s backbone’

“Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises are the backbone of the global tourism sector”, said UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, welcoming the cooperation agreement. These “were hit hardest of all by the pandemic”, he added. “With the right support, they can grow to become true agents of change and help build a more inclusive and sustainable sector. UNWTO is proud to be supporting thousands of small businesses, in Morocco and across the world, make the shift to digital and so become more innovative and competitive.”

The Thematic Session brought together leaders from the public sector, including Fatim-Zahra Ammor, Minister of Tourism for Morocco, Siandou Fofana, Minister of Tourism for Côte d'Ivoire, and Özgül Özkan Yavuz, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Türkiye. Joining them for panel discussions focused on **nurturing human capital and empowering small businesses** were private sector leaders from Radisson Hotel Group, Mastercard, Spain's tourism promotion agency Tourespaña, Eloha, Livali Europe, Pikala, Hosco and Les Roches Global. Also providing insights were tourism leaders representing the Moroccan Agency for Tourism Development, the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation and Bahrain Tourism and Exhibition Authority, as well as the International Labor Organization.

UNWTO Digital Futures Programme

The commitment to supporting Moroccan MSMEs represents the first pilot project of the UNWTO Digital Futures Programme to be launched in Africa. In Morocco, small enterprises account for around 98% of all tourism businesses and UNWTO has identified the country as a **hub of innovation and entrepreneurship**. Overall, the Digital Futures Programme aims to reach 2 million SMEs globally, giving them support to make the shift to digitalization, including through tailored training and mentorship initiatives with key big tech partners.

Fatim-Zahra Ammor, Minister of Tourism for Morocco, said: “SMEs hold a strategic importance as a major lever for social-economic development in our country. Therefore, supporting SMEs is a key priority for our country and a major element in the Kingdom’s development strategies.”

Also in Marrakesh, UNWTO announced plans to partner with the Ministry of Tourism to launch a National Startup Competition: “Invest in the development of Moroccan Tourism”, alongside advancing the creation of an enhanced innovation framework to support tech-driven businesses in the country.

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