One Year On, Tourism Stands Firm in Support of Ukraine

This week, we mark a sad anniversary. It has been one year since the Russian Federation chose to invade Ukraine, in a clear breach of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law.

The invasion has exacted a terrible price. Millions have been forced to flee their homes – right now around 6 million people, 65 per cent of them women and girls, are internally displaced. And the number of casualties keeps growing by the day, including civilian victims as homes and even hospitals are deliberately targeted. The invasion has also created a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe not seen in Europe since World War II. And it has undermined the sense of security and trust we depend on to get the world moving again after the impacts of the pandemic.

From the very start, UNWTO has led tourism’s response to the crisis. Our Members moved swiftly to suspend Russia from our Organization. At the same time, stakeholders from across the sector rallied in support of the Ukrainian people. As many as 8 million of them have sought refuge across Europe and UNWTO commends tourism actors who provided them with means of transport, accommodation and other practical assistance. We also thank the countries hosting refugees until returning is safe.

With no end in sight for the war, our solidarity must hold firm. This unwanted anniversary offers a moment to take stock and reflect. The past year has shown us the remarkable strength of a people determined to hold onto their freedom and sovereignty. It has also shown us the importance of standing together, both as an international community and as a major economic sector, and staying true to our shared values whatever the cost.

With each passing day, the united front that much of the global community has adopted since the invasion is also under attack, especially as countries everywhere continue to feel the economic fallout of the conflict and its social cost. That’s why UNWTO will continue to amplify tourism’s calls for peace and urge an immediate end to all hostilities. We will also be there when the war ends, as it surely will. Then, tourism’s unique power, proven time and again, to build trust back, promote dialogue and understanding across borders, and provide opportunities, will be vital to help the people of Ukraine re-build the country they have already given so much to protect.

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