UNWTO and FAO Strengthen Partnership as Leaders Meet in Rome

*Rome, Italy, 30 March 2023* - The importance of tourism for the economic development and empowerment of rural communities was underscored as the leaders of UNWTO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) met in Rome today.

At the start of his official visit to Italy, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili was welcomed to the FAO headquarters for a meeting with FAO Director-General Mr Qu Dongyu. Building on a Memorandum of Understanding signed between both UN agencies in September 2020, the high-level meeting focused on the importance of intensifying collaboration to scale up tourism’s contribution to rural development.

Both leaders recognized the common goals and methods of several key projects, most notably FAO’s Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Sites (GIAHS) and its Digital Villages Initiative, and UNWTO’s Best Tourism Villages, which recognizes those rural destinations that are harnessing the power of tourism as a source of development and opportunity. At the same time, the two Heads of Agency identified the need to boost development and roll-out of capacity-building programmes to improve the tourism potential of FAO GIAHS sites and pilot Digital Villages.

**UNWTO and FAO: Stronger Together**

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “UNWTO is proud to work closely with FAO around a shared determination to drive inclusive development and to make tourism a source of employment and opportunity for rural areas. I welcome FAO Director-General Mr Qu Dongyu’s recognition of the importance of tourism and look forward to further strengthening our partnership.”

FAO Director-General Mr Qu Dongyu commended UNWTO’s work, noting the sector’s importance for addressing rural poverty and providing empowerment to communities outside of cities. He said: “Sustainable rural tourism can help reduce poverty, support resilient agrifood systems and conserve cultural heritage and ecosystems for better production, better nutrition and a better environment and a better life. Let’s work together to promote sustainable rural agritourism and to empower youth and women in the rural communities through decent jobs.”
Tourism, gastronomy, development

Looking ahead, UNWTO Secretary-General Pololikashvili also emphasised the importance of gastronomy tourism for development, most notably in Africa, and the role of both local production value chains and heritage across the continent, and invited the FAO Director-General to key UNWTO events, including the 8th UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism (San Sebastian, Spain, 5-6 October 2023).

Related Links

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