

UNWTO Executive Council Meets in Punta Cana

Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, 19 May 2023 - With global tourism on track to reach pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year, UNWTO convened its Executive Council to advance plans to place education, investments and sustainability at the centre of the sector's future.

Ahead of the 118th session of the UNWTO Executive Council, the latest UNWTO [World Tourism Barometer](#) showed international arrivals reached 80% of pre-pandemic levels. The first quarter global results of 2023 set the pace for this upward trend to continue.

Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "In 2022, UNWTO asked the world to "rethink tourism". Now it's time to put those plans into action. Building a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive tourism sector will require more and better-targeted investments, skilled workers and more innovation. UNWTO is working closely with our Member States to make significant progress in all these areas and we leave Punta Cana with a clear focus around shared goals and a shared vision for our sector."

Highest Political Support for Tourism

UNWTO welcomed delegations from 40 countries to its Council meeting, with the high-level political support reflecting tourism's heightened relevance.

- UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili met with **President Luis Abinader** of the Dominican Republic. The one-on-one meeting focused on tourism investments and education, both shared priorities.
- The 118th session of the Executive Council counted on the participation of high-level delegations from 40 countries, including 30 Council members.
- Secretary-General Pololikashvili was awarded the Association of Hotels and Tourism of the Dominican Republic's "Champion of Tourism" recognition for his leadership of the sector and friendship of the country.

Guiding Tourism Forward

The UNWTO Secretary-General gave Member States an overview of the Organization's work since the previous Executive Council (Marrakesh, Morocco, 25 November 2022) as well as UNWTO's priorities looking ahead:

- The Secretary-General's report provided an up-to-date overview of tourism numbers and trends, identifying potential challenges for 2023 and beyond, including the cost-of-living crisis and geopolitical uncertainty.
- Members were given an overview of UNWTO's key achievements around its main priorities (investments, education and jobs, innovation and tourism and rural development).
- Participants were provided with a update on UNWTO's status as an Organization, including plans to open new Regional and Thematic offices, and new approaches to tourism governance.

Focus on Sustainability

On the eve of the Executive Council, UNWTO participated in an International Forum on Sustainable Tourism organized by the Dominican Republic. In Punta Cana, UNWTO:

- invited the Dominican Republic and Maldives to become the **first countries to sign up to the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative**, designed to reduce waste and increase circularity in the sector;
- provided an overview of its central role in advancing sustainability, including as part of the One Planet Network, which UNWTO will continue to lead in 2024-25; and
- announced progress on the creation of a landmark first global standard for **Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism**

Education, Jobs and Investments: Priorities for Tourism

During its Executive Council session, the UNWTO Secretariat provided updates on progress made in advancing its key priorities of education, jobs and investments:

- UNWTO and the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts have partnered for a **Bachelor's Degree in International Sustainable Tourism**
- Reflecting the feedback of Members, UNWTO is set to launch a new Educational Toolkit to help make **tourism a subject in high schools** everywhere
- UNWTO **Investment Guidelines** are serving as the bridge between investors, destinations and projects, with editions focused on countries in the Americas and Africa
- Plans to create a **Pan-African Tourism Fund**, a Guarantee Fund to provide security for banks, investors and financial institutions, continue to advance

Within the framework of the Executive Council, UNWTO held the first ever Thematic Session on tourism communications and its role in building a new narrative focused on the sector's importance for economic development and social opportunity.

Related links:

[Tourism Bounces Back](#)

[UNWTO's key achievements](#)

[Global Tourism Plastics Initiative](#)

[One Planet Network](#)

[Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism](#)

[UNWTO Executive Council - 118th Session](#)