

UNWTO Conference on the International Code for the Protection of Tourists

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 15 June 2023

(Venue: Sokha Phnom Penh Residence)

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Background

The pandemic made clear the importance of trust for tourism.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the closure of borders with little or no notice left hundreds of thousands of tourists stranded abroad, with millions of flights being cancelled and the situation soon deteriorating. The lack of clarity regarding one another's responsibilities to provide assistance to tourists in difficulty created great uncertainty around their rights, impacting negatively on the confidence of tourists in international travel.

This experience has revealed the absence of an international legal framework to assist tourists in emergency situations. It has also made clear the fragmentation of consumer protection standards at the international level and the existing disparities regarding the consumer rights of tourists from country to country.

Based on the lessons learned during the pandemic, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) fast-forwarded the **International Code for the Protection of Tourists¹ (ICPT)**, a landmark instrument for the protection of tourists at the international level, establishing a comprehensive set of principles and recommendations for the protection of tourists in emergency situations, including but not limited to pandemics, and consumer rights of tourists in the post COVID-19 era.²

By developing and harmonizing minimum international standards for the protection of tourists, the ICPT intends to provide practical guidance and serve as point of reference as to policy, legislation and regulatory practices for all those, in the public and private sector, who have obligations, responsibilities, duties and rights regarding the matters dealt with in the Code.

At the same time, the ICPT is designed to offer tourists greater protection as consumers and help make people feel safer and more confident in international travel, through a more clear, transparent and harmonized framework and a better and more balanced allocation of responsibility among all actors involved.

¹ Adopted by Resolution 732 (XXIV) of the General Assembly at its 24th session held in Madrid, Spain, from 30 November to 3 December 2021.

² For more information about the UNWTO International Code for the Protection of Tourists, please visit the ICPT website and the FAQs.

2. The Conference

In the framework of the **35th Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia**, an event that annually brings together the tourism ministers of the region, the UNWTO is organizing, together with the **Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia**, this **Conference on the International Code for the Protection of Tourists**, which will take place in **Phnom Penh, Cambodia**, on **15-17 June 2023**.

The purpose of the Conference is to address gaps in existing legal frameworks and disparities between countries in terms of the protection of tourists in emergency situations and the rights of tourists as consumers, share experiences and best practices among countries for rebuilding trust in tourism, as well as to explore opportunities for the harmonization of minimum standards tourists' protection in the post-COVID19 world.

3. Objectives

The Conference will address the current challenges and opportunities to restore confidence in travel and accelerate the recovery of the tourism in the Asia and the Pacific Region after the unprecedented crisis that hit the sector in 2020, highlighting the importance of harmonization in the development of minimum international standards for the protection of tourists, through:

- a high-level discussion on how to rethink tourism and address effectively and resolutely the specific challenges that the sector is facing in the Asia and the Pacific Region in the world after COVID-19;
- two technical discussions on assistance to international tourists in emergency situations, including but not limited to pandemics, and protection of tourists as consumers;
- the promotion of more clear, transparent and harmonized frameworks for a greater protection of tourists and more balanced allocation of responsibilities among tourism stakeholders; and
- the development and harmonization of minimum standards at the regional and international levels through the promotion of the International Code for the Protection of Tourists.



The Conference will address issues such as:

- What are the main challenges and opportunities for the recovery of tourism in the world after COVID-19 and how are these being faced within the region?
- Has tourism changed in the post-COVID 19 world? How can we rethink tourism and rebuild consumers' confidence in travel?
- Why is harmonization important for tourism? What are the advantages of a more clear, transparent and harmonized frameworks for both the public and private sector? And for tourists?
- What is the International Code for the Protection of Tourists? Why is the Code considered a 'flexible instrument'?
- How will the Code improve the protection of tourists within the region? What benefits do adherence to the Code offer to Member States?
- Does the ICPT address the private sector? How will it improve the contractual relationship with tourism stakeholders?

4. Target Audience

The Conference is organized towards ministerial delegates from member countries, international organizations, industry experts and professionals from around the globe as well as the local associations and stakeholders from the tourism sector.

