World Tourism Day: Sector Pledges to Promote Investment, Education and New Destinations

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 28 September 2023 - The legacy of the World Tourism Day 2023 celebrations will live on in the shape of greater investments in the sector's sustainability and a shared commitment to spread the benefits the sector delivers even more widely.

Hosted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the official celebrations welcomed more than 50 Ministers of Tourism alongside hundreds of high-level delegates from the public and private sectors. The day featured expert-led panels focused on key topics around this year's theme of Tourism and Green Investments, with plans backed up with concrete actions as UNWTO announced several important new initiatives.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “This year has been the biggest World Tourism Day ever, and we want to make sure it leaves the biggest impact too. From Riyadh, we have joined our global sector around a pledge to promote new destinations, to diversify the economic and social benefits of tourism, and have announced a new school that will transform tourism education in the Middle East.”

Tourism Pledges to Open Minds

In Riyadh, Secretary-General Pololikashvili introduced "Tourism Opens Minds", a landmark initiative designed to showcase the powerful role that tourism plays in bridging cultures and fostering peace and understanding. With UNWTO's latest data indicating the sector is well on track to recover as much as 95% of pre-pandemic arrivals numbers by the end of 2023, Tourism Opens Minds is designed to ensure that this strong recovery is joined by a greater emphasis on tourists exploring less-visited destinations. The focus will be on:

- Making lesser-known destinations more accessible to all tourists and ensuring all visitors receive a warm welcome by host communities
- Promoting lesser-known destinations and actively working to make tourists visit them
- Working with governments and the private sector to encourage tourists themselves to be more open-minded in their choice of travel destination
To mark the launch, UNWTO unveiled a new symbol for the initiative, made up of the colours of the various flags of the world, and shared a pledge for the sector to unite around. A special pledge, to be supported by Governments, private sector leaders and tourists themselves, was shared with select delegates, calling on them to commit to promoting new and diverse travel destinations.

**Investing in Tourism Education**

To ensure that the World Tourism Day 2023 celebrations leave a lasting impact in Riyadh and across the wider region, UNWTO Secretary-General Pololikashvili joined with Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Tourism Ahmed Al-Khateeb to announce a joint project focused on creating new generations of skilled tourism workers:

- The Riyadh School of Tourism and Hospitality will be a collaborative effort between UNWTO, the Ministry of Tourism of Saudi Arabia and Qiddiya
- With 80% of all global tourism education programs currently focused on hotel operations, the Riyadh School will deliver learning for every part of the diverse sector.
- The School will offer eight different levels of educational programs including diplomas and certificates through to professional courses and courses at the Bachelors and Master’s degree level.

**Related Links**

Tourism Open Minds Initiative