Agenda item 18

Place and dates of the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly

Madrid, 22 August 2023

Original: English

Executive summary

The General Assembly is requested to decide on the venue of its twenty-sixth session.

Within the statutory deadlines, the Secretary-General has received only one official communication, from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, submitting its candidature to host the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization in 2025.

Action by the General Assembly

DRAFT RESOLUTION¹

The General Assembly,

Having regard to Article 10 of the Statutes and Article 1 of its Rules of Procedure,

Having taking cognizance of the candidature submitted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has received the sponsorship of at least 10% of the Member States,

Recalling that acceptance of the standard conditions laid out in the model agreement set out in the Annex to document A/20/5(II)(i) adopted through resolution 631(XX) is a preliminary requirement for the submission of a valid candidacy to host a General Assembly session,

Noting that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has undertaken in writing to observe the legal framework for the holding of UNWTO meetings away from headquarters and provide the conditions established in the above-mentioned model agreement for the hosting of the General Assembly,

1. Thanks the Saudi Arabian Government warmly for its invitation; and

2. Decides that its twenty-sixth session will be held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2025.

¹ This is a draft resolution. For the final resolution adopted by the Assembly, please refer to the Resolutions document issued at the end of the session.
I. Procedure for fixing the place and dates of General Assembly sessions

1. The Articles of the Organization’s Statutes and the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly concerning the place and dates of General Assembly sessions are reproduced below for information:

   (a) Article 8(2) of the Statutes:

   “Meetings of the Assembly and the Council shall be held at the Headquarters of the Organization unless the respective organs decide otherwise.”

   (b) Article 10 of the Statutes:

   “The Assembly shall meet in ordinary session every two years and, as well, in extraordinary session when circumstances require. Extraordinary sessions may be convened at the request of the Council or of a majority of Full Members of the Organization.”

   (c) Rule 1 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly:

   “1. The Secretary-General shall convene the Assembly in ordinary session every two years at the Organization’s Headquarters.

   2. The Assembly may meet at another place if it so decides, provided the host country reimburses the extra expenses involved in holding the session.

   3. The date of the session shall be fixed by the Assembly or by the Council, if so empowered and notified to the Members of the Organization not less than seven months before it is due to be held.”

2. Despite the wording of Article 8(2) of the Statutes, in practice, the Assembly does not meet at the Headquarters of the Organization. Through resolution 631(XX), the Assembly recognized that the practice of geographical rotation of its sessions has greatly contributed to promoting the role of tourism and of the Organization around the world, and adopted the guidelines for the selection of venues of sessions of the General Assembly (hereinafter “the Guidelines”) as described in document A/20/5(II)(i).

II. Fixing the venue of the 26th session of the General Assembly

3. Pursuant to the Guidelines, in order for a candidature to be eligible the State concerned must fulfil the following requirements before the General Assembly adopts the resolution concerning the place of its next session:

   (a) Inform the Secretary-General four months before the Assembly that is required to decide on the venue of the session in question,

   (b) Receive the sponsorship of at least 10% of the Member States, and

   (c) Undertake in writing to observe the standard conditions laid out in the model agreement.

4. The standard requirements and conditions laid out in the model agreement shall be the subject of an agreement between the government of the host State and the Organization.

5. The model agreement is based on the legal framework governing the holding of UNWTO meetings away from Headquarters, which is primarily determined by Article 32 of the Statutes, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies and
its Annex XVIII, as well as relevant resolutions by the General Assembly\(^2\), and is aligned with the policy of the United Nations in this regard.

6. Failure to apply any of the standards and principles included in the template agreement may expose delegates of Member States and other participants to, \textit{inter alia}, difficulties issuing visas or refusal to enter into the host country, documentation and media materials destined for the meeting being refused free entry or being searched, customs duties being requested, and non-respect by national authorities of official immunity from legal process (e.g., arrest and detention, commencement of lawsuits). It may also expose the Organization to legal and financial liability.

7. Any State willing to host the General Assembly should, before submitting its candidature, become familiar with the standard requirements set out in the model agreement.

8. Unfortunately, the Secretariat often encounters some reluctance to apply the conditions required by the General Assembly for the hosting of its sessions as well as pressure to deviate from the policy established by it and from the consistent policy of the United Nations in this regard. As a result, lengthy negotiations are undertaken, often with the support of the Secretariat of the United Nations, to ensure that the General Assembly instructions are respected by countries having been elected to host the General Assembly of the Organization.

9. Through resolution 750(XXIV), the General Assembly requested States to undertake in writing that they observe the legal framework for the holding of UNWTO meetings away from Headquarters and provide the provisions established in the model agreement for the hosting the General Assembly pursuant to the Guidelines. To that effect, the Secretariat has developed a model letter for States concerned to incorporate into their candidatures.

10. Should the host country not be in a position to provide the necessary conditions for the hosting of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, in line with his delegated authority pursuant to paragraph (i) of the Guidelines, will adopt any measure as necessary to ensure the proper holding of the session.

\section*{III. List of venues of the previous sessions}

11. It is recalled that, since its inception, UNWTO has held its ordinary General Assembly sessions at the following venues:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
First session & (1975) Madrid (Spain) \\
Second session & (1977) Torremolinos (Spain) \\
Third session & (1979) Torremolinos (Spain) \\
Fourth session & (1981) Rome (Italy) \\
Fifth session & (1983) New Delhi (India) \\
Sixth session & (1985) Sofia (Bulgaria) \\
Seventh session & (1987) Madrid (Spain) \\
Eighth session & (1989) Paris (France) \\
ninth session & (1991) Buenos Aires (Argentina) \\
Tenth session & (1993) Bali (Indonesia) \\
Eleventh session & (1995) Cairo (Egypt) \\
Twelfth session & (1997) Istanbul (Turkey) \\
Thirteenth session & (1999) Santiago (Chile) \\
Fourteenth session & (2001) Seoul (Republic of Korea) / Osaka (Japan) \\
Fifteenth session & (2003) Beijing (China) \\
Sixteenth session & (2005) Dakar (Senegal) \\
Seventeenth session & (2007) Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) \\
Eighteenth session & (2009) Astana (Kazakhstan) \\
Nineteenth session & (2011) Gyeongju (Republic of Korea) \\
Twentieth session & (2013) Victoria Falls (Zambia and Zimbabwe) \\
Twenty-first session & (2015) Medellin (Colombia) \\
Twenty-second session & (2017) Chengdu (China) \\
Twenty-third session & (2019) Saint Petersburg (Russian Federation) \\
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\(^2\) A/RES/136(V), A/RES/489(XVI), A/RES/631(XX), A/RES/662(XXI) and A/RES/750(XXIV)
IV. Candidatures received for the twenty-sixth session

12. On 24 January 2023, the Secretariat informed all Member States through a Note Verbale of the candidature of Saudi Arabia to host the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization in 2025 (Annex I).

13. The above candidature is the only official communication received by the Secretary-General within the statutory deadlines.

14. The Secretary-General has transmitted to the aforementioned State the standard requirements for its candidature to be eligible and has shared, in particular, the model agreement, as acceptance of the conditions laid out therein is a preliminary condition for the submission of a valid candidacy pursuant to the Guidelines.

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Annex I: Saudi Arabia’s candidature letter to host the 26th session of UNWTO General Assembly

H.E. Zurab Pololikashvili
Secretary-General
United Nations World Tourism Organization

Your Excellency,

I would like to take this opportunity to present my compliments to Your Excellency and to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

I have the honor to formally submit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s candidature to host the 26th session of the UNWTO General Assembly in 2023. We kindly request for the Member States to be informed of this candidature.

Kindly accept my personal regards,

Ahmed Al Khatib
Minister of Tourism of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia