Europe’s Tourism Leaders Plan Closer Cooperation Across Region

Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 17 October 2023 – Europe’s tourism leaders have met to advance plans for stronger collaboration both within and outside of the region, including through the landmark Agenda for Europe.

The UNWTO Commission for Europe met within the framework of the 25th session of the Organization’s General Assembly, in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. For its second gathering of the year, the meeting brought together high-level representatives from nearly 40 European countries to discuss the challenges impacting the tourism industry in the European region and the way ahead.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the UNWTO, thanked the Government of Uzbekistan for its warm hospitality to all the members and participants of the Organization’s highest statutory meeting: “Samarkand, with its rich history and cultural significance, serves as an inspiring backdrop for our discussions on the future of European tourism. Together, we can shape a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism sector.”

Agenda for European Tourism

The members of the Commission for Europe discussed and adopted the “Agenda for Europe – Tourism Leading the Change,” an initiative proposed by Greece, during the Commission’s 66th meeting, when it was the Commission’s Chair, with the aim of boosting tourism activities in Europe, increasing cooperation levels, and strengthening collaboration with the other UNWTO regions.

The proposed “Agenda for Europe” was elaborated by a dedicated Working Group, comprised by representatives of Armenia, Cyprus, Greece, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, and Ukraine (current Chair of the Commission for Europe). The Working Group consulted in this regard with the other European members and the Secretariat. The Secretary-General will report to the Executive Council and the General Assembly on this proposed Agenda.
Uzbekistan to Host Silk Road Tourism Hub

The Establishment of UNWTO Thematic Office for Tourism on the Silk Road in Samarkand, Uzbekistan was also one of the key topics of discussion during this 69th meeting of the Commission. The government of Uzbekistan had put forward a proposal to establish the first UNWTO Thematic Office specifically dedicated to the advancement of Tourism on Silk Road, in recognition of the significance role of the Silk Road in promoting global tourism. It underlined that this ambitious initiative was another expression of the commitment of Uzbekistan to a sustainable and resilient tourism development.

Advancing Youth and Gender Empowerment

The Secretary-General took the opportunity to unveil to the members of Commission for Europe, the release of the Youth4Tourism: A Handbook to Champion Youth Participation in Tourism at the National Level, an initiative, part of the Global Youth Tourism Platform, aimed at increasing youth participation in the tourism sector at the national level. The Handbook provides guidelines for organizing physical and virtual events, along with useful activity examples.

As one of UNWTO's key priorities, the Secretary-General invited national tourism authorities to implement these guidelines and offer to children and youth, new opportunities to gain knowledge and develop sustainable skills. Through the Handbook the younger generation will be able to explore different aspects of responsible and sustainable tourism and formulate their own vision for the future of tourism, aligning with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During the Commission meeting, Slovenia and Uzbekistan announced their willingness to host the future editions of the Global Youth Tourism Summit, in 2024 and 2026.

Also in Samarkand, UNWTO signed a Cooperation Agreement with the Ministry of Culture and Moldova State University for the implementation of the Skills Training and the Gender and Tourism Training under the framework of the "Empowering Young Women: Sustainable Livelihoods through Tourism" project in the Republic of Moldova.

Uzbekistan Reaffirms Support for Tourism

Deputy Chair of the Government Commission on Tourism Development and Minister of Ecology, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change of Uzbekistan, Aziz Abdukhakimov, underlined the Uzbekistan Government's firm commitment to advancing sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism. He said: “Today, international tourism demonstrates its efficiency and resilience to new challenges and realizations. For our countries, the tourism industry is a strategic industry, contributing to the growth of prosperity, creating new jobs and strengthening social and humanitarian ties in society.”

As an integral part of the historic Silk Road, Uzbekistan is making comprehensive efforts to promote this tourist destination and aims to ensure its long-term development by establishing the first UNWTO Thematic Office for Tourism on the Silk Road in Samarkand.
Related Links

69th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Europe

#Youth4Tourism – A Handbook to Champion Youth Participation in Tourism at the National Level

Global Youth Tourism Summit