General Assembly Concludes With Clear Vision for UNWTO and Tourism

Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 19 October 2023 - Global tourism leaders have further advanced plans for a more ethical, diverse sector led by a growing UNWTO. The 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly convened for a second day to examine, discuss and approve the Organization’s work, with a focus on expanding its global presence, ethics and legal frameworks and the role of public-private partnerships.

New Regional and Thematic Offices

UNWTO’s commitment to moving closer to its Members and being on the ground in every region was further emphasized as the Assembly was given an update on work to establish new Regional and Thematic offices. Members heard:

- The Regional Office for the Middle East, opened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2021, is an established hub for tourism education and tourism for rural development. From here, UNWTO has opened the Riyadh School for Hospitality and Tourism, launched a first Education Toolkit for high schools, and also launched the Best Tourism Villages initiative.

- UNWTO signed an agreement with the Government of Brazil to establish a Regional Office in Rio de Janeiro, to be focused on investments.

- The planned Regional Office for Africa in Marrakesh, Morocco, will focus on the priorities of innovation and investments in tourism.

- The hosts of this Assembly, Uzbekistan, presented its proposal to establish a Thematic Office for Tourism on the Silk Road. The proposal was approved by the 119th session of the UNWTO Executive Council.

Ethics Committee

The General Assembly further built on UNWTO’s leading work to create a more ethical and accessible sector, while also increasing confidence in travel and tourism. The Global Code of Ethics were the foundation for UNWTO becoming a UN agency. In Samarkand, the Assembly approved new members to serve on the World Committee of Tourism Ethics, with a clear commitment to diversity. Members also looked ahead to the International Conference on Accessible Tourism, due to take place in San Marino in November.
During the Plenary Session, UNWTO formally welcomed those Members that have already agreed to adhere to the **International Code for the Protection of Tourists**. To date, Argentina, Brazil, Lebanon, Lithuania, Portugal, Senegal, Uruguay and Venezuela have all agreed to adhere to the landmark legal instrument. The Code was designed during the pandemic, with the first harmonized international legal framework set to play a key role in restoring consumer confidence in travel.

**World Tourism Day Report**

Just three weeks after World Tourism Day 2023, Member States were given an update on UNWTO's work growing the sector's global day of observance. The Secretary of the Assembly provided a recap of the past two events and looked ahead to the two years to come.

- World Tourism Day 2022 was hosted in Bali, Indonesia, around the theme of Rethinking Tourism, with the 2023 celebrations – the biggest to date – held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, around the theme of Tourism and Green Investments. The General Assembly agreed to **adopt the “Tourism Opens Minds” pledge**, introduced by UNWTO that day, and recommends that the Secretariat takes steps to advance the initiative, including through the funding of relevant programmes and campaigns.

- Members of the General Assembly approved the themes and the hosts for the next two years. For 2024, the theme will be “Tourism and Peace”, to be hosted by Georgia, and then Malaysia will host World Tourism Day 2025 around the theme of Tourism and Sustainable Developments.

**Strong, stable Organization**

In his report to the General Assembly during the First Plenary, Secretary-General Pololikashvili highlighted the ongoing work to strengthen and modernise the Organization. Members of the Assembly agreed to Extend the mandate of the Task Force on Redesigning Tourism for the Future until the 26th session of the General Assembly. The Task Force aims to reinforce UNWTO's role in guiding the global sector forward through long-term strategy and vision. Nine Member States were approved to serve on the Task Force for the next two years. Members were provided with an update on the reforms to reinforce UNWTO's compliance with UN standards, most notably through the Joint Inspection Unit.

The General Assembly voted with 73% in favour of Secretary-General Pololikashvili being permitted to present his candidature for a third mandate.
Affiliate Members

UNWTO’s Affiliate Members represent the broad diversity of the sector, counting on representatives from business, academia and civil society. The Report of the Chair of the Board of Affiliate Members gave the Assembly an update on work done over the past two years, with a clear focus on growing the Affiliates’ role in the mission of the Organization as a whole. Members welcomed the achievements of the Affiliate Members network, including in efforts to grow new areas of tourism to promote economic diversity and resilience.

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25th UNWTO General Assembly