Background

The Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific of UNWTO proposes to organize a workshop on the UNWTO Programme of Work (PoW) tailor made for the Asia-Pacific Member States. The workshop is planned to be hosted in Madrid, at UNWTO Headquarters on 12-15 December 2023 (tentative dates).

Since the pandemic started, UNWTO took the lead to guide the travel and tourism towards recovery and the new normal. In line with the achievement of the SDGs, to advocate and support the indispensable sustainable shift of the sector post-COVID 19 UNWTO created pioneered initiatives on critical challenges such as:

- Lack of comprehensive and reliable data about international tourism recovery -> UNWTO Tourism Data Dashboard & World Tourism Barometer
- Lack of legal certainty and clarity regarding countries obligations, duties and rights on the protection of international tourists during emergency situations -> International Code for the Protection of Tourists (ICPT)
- Lack of attractiveness of the tourism sector for new talents -> UNWTO Tourism Online Academy & UNWTO Toolkit (TBA)
- Tourism dispersal & rural desertification -> Best Tourism Village Initiative by UNWTO (BTV)
- Concrete sustainable tourism development initiatives such as the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism (GDCAT), the Global Plastics Tourism Initiative (GPTI), and the International Network for Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO)

These initiatives form part of a comprehensive plan of UNWTO to guide the tourism sector from crisis to transformation.

Tourism has the potential to become once again one of the fastest growing economic sector in the world. Nowadays, UNWTO estimates that international tourism recovered 84% of pre-pandemic levels in the period comprised between January and July 2023 (or -16% compared with 2019). However, Asia and the Pacific region is still lagging behind compared with other regions:
On average, countries from the Asia Pacific region remained closed to international tourism the longest compared to countries of other regions. Key tourism markets such as China and Japan only recently opened for outbound and inbound international travels.

Although international tourism in Asia and the Pacific is still struggling to recover (especially in the Pacific Islands, usually heavily reliant tourism expenditures and foreign currencies for their socio-economic development), the sector proved its resiliency and adaptability to crises over time. International tourism growth may increase exponentially in Asia and the Pacific and reach surpass the average 5% growth worldwide as it was the case for many years prior to COVID-19.

With this hopeful picture in mind, the Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific would like to invite the Focal Points of its 29 Asia-Pacific UNWTO Member States for this workshop.

Objectives

In light of the situation described above, the workshop on UNWTO PoW for Asia and the Pacific will aim to:

- Offer an exclusive access for Asia and the Pacific Member States focal points to engage directly with the Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific regarding the UNWTO PoW for the region and with UNWTO operational departments in charge of pioneered initiatives leading the recovery and transformation of the sector (e.g. BTV, ICPT, UNWTO Online Academy, GDCAT & GPTI).
- Gain a unique insight on UNWTO Secretariat’s culture and structure to improve coordination and relations between Member States and RDAP and other relevant operational departments.
- Provide a platform for UNWTO Asia-Pacific Focal Points to meet and network all together for the first time at UNWTO HQ.
- Engage in visits and technical tours in Madrid and the area to take advantage of the Focal Point presence in Spain to learn first-hand from successful tourism cases of one of the top 3 visited destinations worldwide.
Targeted participants

The Focal Points of the 29 Asia-Pacific Member States were selected as the best participants for this workshop taking into consideration their long working relation with RDAP and their expertise on UNWTO affairs in relation with their administration. Although all Focal Points will be invited, RDAP expects that a maximum of 20 participants should join the workshop.

Logistical arrangements

UNWTO will provide the following:

- Accommodation in Madrid and Toledo for all Focal Points for a total of 5 nights
- 3 lunches and 3 dinners (12, 13 & 15 December)
- Transportation for the technical visit to Segovia, Avila and Toledo on 13 – 14 December
- Guiding tour for Segovia