UN Tourism and UN Habitat Partner for a Better Urban Future Through Tourism

Bilbao, Spain, 21-22 March 2024 - UN Tourism and Spain’s Office of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) partnered to discuss the role and challenges of tourism in cities and territories.

The meeting, held with the support of the Department of Territorial Planning of the Basque Government under the theme “Advancing Sustainable Urban Tourism: developing tools for promoting good practices in cities”, gathered experts from UN agencies, international organizations, representatives of national, regional and local governments, academia and the private sector. The Experts Group explored how the sector can contribute to the creation of more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities, as well as addressing the challenges around urban tourism.

Representatives from Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bilbao, Genoa, Medellin, Porto, Valencia, Venice, as well as the Basque Country, shared their policies and practices fostering knowledge exchange and opportunities for mutual collaboration. From the UN Tourism and UN-Habitat intersection of mandates, different perspectives about the role of tourism as a contributor to the social, economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability of the cities were brought to the debate. Representatives of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme and the (OECD) Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development were also part to the meeting and shared their vision and experiences in a topic that brings together cities, tourism, territories, economy, environment, culture and heritage.

Objectives and outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting

The experts meeting focused on:

• Identifying current challenges for sustainable urban tourism.
• Understanding the role of tourism in the Urban Agenda.
• Looking into the latest trends and ongoing initiatives, policies and plans on urban tourism.
• Exploring how innovative approaches could contribute to promoting sustainable tourism in urban contexts and territories.
• Exploring ways to integrate a sustainable urban tourism approach into policies and plans in urban and territorial settings.
Next Steps in the Global Urban Agenda

The Expert Group Meeting takeaways will deepen the work of both UN Agencies on advancing sustainable and resilient cities and territories and will serve to guide regional and local governments and other stakeholders in identifying the key challenges facing urban tourism in order to move towards sustainability in their contexts, providing them with tools and proposals to address them.

The conclusions from the meeting will also serve to prepare the discussions and events on sustainable urban tourism at the 12th World Urban Forum (WUF 12) in November 2024 in Cairo, Egypt and the Mayors Forum for Sustainable Urban Tourism, led by UN Tourism.

Related links:

Urban Tourism