Tirana, Albania, 8 April 2024 - Europe’s national tourism authorities have met to advance shared solutions to the biggest challenges facing tourism as well as the opportunities offered by the sector’s post-pandemic return.

The 70th meeting of the UN Tourism Commission for Europe brought together 40 high-level representatives in the Albanian capital. With the participation of nearly all UN Tourism’s Members in the region, the meeting served as a platform for dialogue and collaboration, providing a ground for exchanging knowledge, sharing best practices, and addressing the challenges and opportunities facing the tourism sector.

Albania leads Europe’s tourism rebound

Prior to the meeting, UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili met with the Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama to discuss shared priorities and future collaboration. The Secretary General has commended Albania’s leadership in tourism recovery after the pandemic – the country has been one of the best performing destinations in 2023, showing 53% increase over the international tourism arrivals registered in 2019.

The Secretary-General and the Prime Minister also discussed the importance of sustainable tourism development and opportunities to further enhance the tourism sector in Albania. They exchanged views on key strategies to promote responsible tourism practices, harness digital innovation, and further contribute to economic growth through tourism education. They underscored the value of fostering a resilient and inclusive tourism industry that benefits local communities and preserves cultural heritage.

Legal framework for the Agenda for Europe

High-level delegations representing 40 Members were informed about the work and activities realized by UN Tourism since the Commission met in Bulgaria in June 2023, as well as strategic objectives and priorities, with a focus on:

- Political outlook and the situation Europe
- The rebranding of World Tourism Organization
- Latest data on tourism arrivals and receipts
- Events and initiatives
One of the main highlights of this meeting was the adoption of the legal framework of the Agenda for Europe. The Members adopted the Rules of Procedure of the Working Group, the Selection Criteria and Key Performance Indicators for the evaluation for the projects supported through the Agenda for Europe and agreed on the priorities for the elaboration of the workplan of the Agenda for Europe for 2024. The Agenda for Europe is the manifestation of the priorities of the members in the region of Europe, the world’s leading destination and a pioneer in tourism innovation. It aims to ensure a regional focus that will benefit and address the specific needs of the members at a regional and subregional level.

This document is the result of a consultative process among the members in the region, initiated during the 66th meeting of the Commission for Europe in 2021, to advance the adaptability of the European tourism ecosystem to the new trends and reality that emerged in the post-pandemic era.

Moving forward

The Commission Members were updated about the preparations for World Tourism Day 2024 by Georgia and accepted the invitation of Azerbaijan to host the Commission meeting in 2025.

Subregional focus.

The second meeting of the Working Group for Southeast Europe was held on the sidelines of the 70th meeting of the Commission for Europe, by the initiative of the host, Albania, and UN Tourism. The purpose of the meeting was to foster an in-depth discussions on the specific challenges facing the tourism sector in Southeast Europe. Representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia shared their ideas, insights, and opinions, with a special focus on short-term rentals and regional investments.

Tomorrow, a traditional side conference will be held about “Tourism Investments and Economic Development in Europe”. During this event, a guideline “Tourism Doing Business: Investing in Albania”, developed by UN Tourism, will be presented. The speakers, experts, and other participants of the event will discuss the global tourism investments trends and opportunities, identify avenues for accelerating tourism investments for positive change and for the benefit for all and share success stories and future prospects of tourism investments in Albania.

Related links:

Regional department for Europe
70th meeting of the Commission for Europe (CEU)