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UNWTO on the thematic review of the HLPF 2022

Requested by His Excellency Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) vis-à-vis

Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development (OISC) - Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations (UN) Specialized agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

In view of the forthcoming 2022 HLPF (High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development) on the theme ***Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development***, which will include a review of the “progress toward *SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 14 on life below water, SDG 15 on life on land, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the Goals*”, UNWTO submits the current note as its contribution to the process.

SDG 4 on quality education:

It is evident that digital transformation has advanced during the pandemic and so has online education, which will help the tourism sector to provide more opportunities to communities all over the world.

Despite representing 10% of the world’s jobs before COVID-19, and employing the largest number of women, tourism has faced a challenge in terms of skills development. Indeed, almost 20% of the employed people in selected tourism industries in the European Union had less than primary and lower secondary education in 2018. Furthermore, currently there is no continuous measurement or updated data on skills development and its contribution to creating added value jobs.

A lower level of salaries in comparison to other economic sectors put in evidence the need to provide more education opportunities and the creation of a professional path for the sector, which means to put tourism in curricula as a vital sector for global economy and to allow employees to scale up their careers in the several subsectors.

In this regard, UNWTO encourages to increase democratization of online education through high-quality and affordable programmes and a scheme of scholarships worldwide. For this reason, it has strengthened its [UNWTO Tourism](#)



[Online Academy](#) as a platform, including its developed knowledge, material and content with the courses, that is aimed at leaving no one behind.

SDG 5 on gender equality:

Tourism has historically been a leading sector in the achievement of SDG 5, providing opportunities for women's economic empowerment, leadership and educational possibilities. The devastating impact of COVID-19 on tourism however, has been felt disproportionately by women in the sector. The preliminary findings of UNWTO research indicate that more women than men in tourism saw their earnings decrease or lost their jobs during the pandemic, stalling progress towards SDG 5 and exacerbating existing gender inequalities.

As the sector recovers, UNWTO strongly recommends that governments develop gender-responsive recovery policies for a post-COVID19 tourism in order to harness the sector's huge empowering potential for women. Policies should be adopted with a view to promoting decent employment for women in tourism, ensuring opportunities for entrepreneurship are equally accessible, developing diverse skills for a post-COVID19 tourism and increasing the production and reporting of sex-disaggregated tourism data.

Implementing recovery plans and policies that are gender-responsive would allow governments and businesses to advance progress towards the objectives of SDG 5, using tourism's restart to make up for the increase in gender inequalities observed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional resources/actions:

UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide: On the occasion of the International Women's Day, UNWTO released on 8 March 2021, the [UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide – Sociocultural Impacts of COVID-19, Issue III: Women in Tourism](#). UNWTO collaborated with UN Women to produce guidelines aimed at achieving gender equality and providing equal opportunities to women at all levels in the tourism sector. Both agencies call for more inclusive and resilient societies and economies in order to be able to better respond to adverse economic shocks affecting women.

[Centre Stage: Women's empowerment during the COVID-19 recovery](#): UNWTO believes that the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic present the tourism sector with a golden opportunity to redefine its gender balance. With the Support of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany and UN WOMEN, UNWTO will implement the Centre Stage project for 'Women's empowerment during the COVID19 recovery', with the aim to strengthen, coordinate and focus work towards gender equality in tourism governmental institutions and businesses as they recover from the pandemic. The Centre Stage project bases its activities in the findings of the Global Report on Women in Tourism Second edition, which focuses action into six strategic areas (i) Employment; (ii) Entrepreneurship; (iii) Education and Training; (iv) Leadership, policy and decision-making; (v) Community and civil society and (vi) Measurement for better policies. The project is being piloted

in four Member States from 2021 - 2022: Jordan, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and Mexico.

New set of guidelines addressing the needs of women in the tourism sector: The twin publications for the public and private sectors respectively, provide specific tools to support tourism institutions and businesses to integrate gender considerations into their policies, programming and strategies and boost the opportunities tourism offers for women's empowerment. They have been developed with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and UN Women, with the additional purpose of ensuring an inclusive and resilient recovery from the impacts of the pandemic, given the disproportionate effect suffered by women working in tourism.

- [Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines for the Public Sector in Tourism](#)
- [Gender-inclusive Strategy for Tourism Businesses](#)

SDG 14 on life below water:

The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative aims to stop plastic ending up as pollution, notably as marine pollution, while also reducing the amount of new plastic that needs to be produced. In coastal areas, increases in levels of marine litter have been registered during tourism peak season as much of the plastic used in tourism is made to be thrown away and often can be recycled.

UNWTO is leading, together with UNEP and in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the implementation of the [Global Tourism Plastics Initiative \(GTPI\)](#) as a framework to transition to a circular economy of plastics and tackle plastic pollution at the source.

GTPI involves a growing number of tourism businesses and organizations (current members have a combined estimated annual revenue of over USD43 billion) that have joined forces to take up the challenge of plastic pollution. In 2021, the number of signatories increased by 250% from 46 to 115.

The Initiative operates following three complementary approaches:

- Fostering that tourism stakeholders are committing to a set of ambitious and actionable targets around elimination of unnecessary and problematic plastics, introduction of reuse models and collaboration on value chain level to increase recycling rates and recycled content;
- Ensuring that organizations and companies are annually disclosing their progress of implementation (see Annual Report 2021 [here](#)); and,
- Supporting the implementation of the targets and commitments through the provision of guidance and technical recommendations. For instance the [“Recommendations for the Tourism Sector to Continue Taking Action on Plastic Pollution during COVID-19”](#) or the guidance for the selection of alternatives to plastics titled [“Addressing pollution from single-use plastic products: A Life Cycle Approach – Key messages for tourism businesses”](#)

SDG 15 on life on land:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought greater awareness of the impact that human activities can have on nature, and of the connection between human health



and biodiversity. The links between pandemic risk and biodiversity show the need for an inclusive, transdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral One Health approach. Because tourism connects people with nature, sustainable tourism has the unique ability to spur environmental responsibility and conservation. Tourism is reflected in the targets of SDG 14 and can contribute also to protecting biodiversity on land (SDG 15) – while providing livelihoods for local communities, women, youth, and indigenous peoples. UNWTO regularly contributes to the works of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and participates actively in the UN Environment Management Group (EMG). Among others UNWTO has contributed to the [2021 Report Supporting the Global Biodiversity Agenda, a United Nations System Commitment for Action to assist Member States delivering on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework](#), as well as to the [Environment Management Group's Biodiversity Report and the UN Common Approach on Biodiversity and Nature-Based Solutions](#).

2. Since the beginning of the pandemic the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has been regularly monitoring travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. The series [COVID-19 Related Travel Restrictions – A Global Review for Tourism](#) provide an overview and analysis on COVID-19 related travel restrictions affecting international tourism. The reports were updated on a regular basis to support mitigation and recovery efforts of the tourism sector, providing a global overview of the measures in place and analysing them from a tourism perspective. Similar analysis has been made when analysing destinations according to their scores in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) which reflects the state of sustainability in a destination. Those destinations with lower EPI scores tended to keep their borders rather closed compared to destinations with higher scores.

SDG 17 on partnerships:

1. While COVID-19 pandemic has jeopardized many efforts to reach sustainability, it has at the same time accelerated digital transformation and technology adoption throughout the tourism value chain, which would not have been possible without strong partnerships. Many stakeholders have joined to boost a sustainable recovery, especially to find innovative solutions, implement online education programmes and make use of traditional and non-traditional investments for a long-term recovery.

UNWTO truly believes in public-private partnerships to achieve the SDGs. For this reason, it has led a process of strengthening the global tourism innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem from before and during the pandemic, encouraging stakeholders to keep a flow of knowledge and investments that could drive scalable projects for both global and local solutions. Namely, UNWTO calls for the active interaction amongst Governments, institutions, corporations, investors, education centers, accelerators, and start-ups, to continue developing based on knowledge and funding to speed up transformation processes.

Youth has proved to be a main source of technology, social impact, and sustainability solutions, for which they need the support of partnerships to unleash all their potential. UNWTO has identified over 100 Top Startups worldwide since 2018 from thousands of applicants and has connected them with investments and piloting opportunities. 48% uses Artificial Intelligence and 34%, Big Data analytics for their



projects amongst other technologies in such a way that we can boost the economy, generate social impact and protect the environment for future generations. In addition, Venture Capitalists have placed their confidence into the sector, demonstrating its resilience with a long-term perspective: “despite the 2020 drop in global investment, the amount of funding towards the travel tech sector remains not only stable, but experienced an increase during the first semester compared to 2019”.

Likewise, UNWTO has carried out the [SDGs Global Startup Competition](#) to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and seeking for a long-term recovery. Over the open call for startups from all economic sectors, it received responses from 10,000 participants from 138 countries. The 25 winning projects have entered a curated programme of benefits with the support of 21 partners and collaborators (such as, Globalia, Qatar Airways, Qatar National Tourism Council, Amazon Web Services, Mastercard, Google, Amadeus, IE University, Telefónica, IDB Lab and Plug and Play), including mentorship, access to technological support, connection to Member States, corporates, and investors for opening the doors to funding and pilot projects opportunities. In addition, the [Top 25 Innovators Working for a More Sustainable and Innovative Tourism catalogue](#) was created to facilitate Member States and private sector access to solutions and setting of partnerships. Additionally, the [Healing Solutions for Tourism Challenge](#) was launched to identify the most disruptive startups, entrepreneurs and drive solutions to mitigate COVID-19's impact on tourism.

2. Taking into consideration the cross-cutting nature of tourism sector and the necessity to bring together all the involved stakeholders to foster sustainable development, The [UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories \(INSTO\)](#) has expanded its activities and organized set of technical webinars and welcomed more members in 2021. The INSTO is a multi-stakeholder partnership scheme for destinations that are committed to regular monitoring of economic, environmental and social impacts of tourism, to unlock the power of evidence-based decision making at the destination-level, fostering sustainable tourism practices locally and globally.

3. UNWTO has been leading the [One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme](#) since its launch in November 2015. The One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme is one of the programmes in the One Planet network, a multi-stakeholder partnership for sustainable development composed by six thematic programmes focusing on buildings and construction, consumer information, food systems, lifestyles and education, public procurement and tourism.[1] Over 700 organizations are members of the network, which has been recognized as an implementation mechanism for SDG12.

The One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme aims to accelerate Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in tourism policies and practices to address the challenges of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change. Through its work, the Programme aims at setting the SCP agenda in the tourism sector to advance the implementation of SDG 12, including the integration of circularity in the tourism value chain, and also supports progress under connected goals such as SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15, respectively on climate action and the protection of marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

The Programme is currently guided by the [One Planet Vision for a Responsible Recovery of The Tourism Sector from COVID-19](#) which was released in 2020 and focuses on three main workstreams:

- Building a circular economy of plastics in tourism
- Integrating SCP in tourism food value chains
- Accelerating climate action in tourism

Among the milestones of the Programme in 2021 is the launch of [The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#) at [UNFCCC COP26](#) with the objective to raise the climate ambition of tourism stakeholders. The Declaration has already welcomed more than 450 signatories which have made commitments to support halving global emissions by 2030 and achieve net zero at the latest. Signatories are requested to submit climate action plans within 12 months and to implement them; to align their plans with five pathways, namely: measure, decarbonize, regenerate, collaborate and finance; to report publicly on progress made implementing those commitments; and to work on a collaborative spirit.

4. [Tourism4SDGs Platform](#): The Platform, developed with the support of the Switzerland State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO) is an innovative online tool providing the global community a space to co-create and engage to realize the 2030 Agenda through tourism. A special [COVID-19 Recovery page](#) was also created within the platform to share best practices to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on tourism.

Additional Statistics resources/initiatives:

- [Conceptual Guidance On Tourism Statistics In The COVID-19 Context](#): The publication [Conceptual Guidance on Tourism Statistics in the COVID-19 Context](#) provides conceptual guidance on the main tourism data and indicators of the UNWTO's statistical database related to new situations arisen in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.
- [How Covid-19 Is Changing the World: A Statistical Perspective](#) (collaboration with Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA): Compiled jointly by 36 international organizations including UNWTO, under the aegis of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) the report provides a snapshot of some of the latest information available on how COVID-19 is affecting different aspects of public and private life, from economic and environmental fluctuations to changes that affect individuals in terms of income, education, employment and changes affecting public services such as civil aviation and postal services.
- [Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism \(SF-MST\)](#): The SF-MST is an organizing structure for integrating statistics on the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable tourism. The complete SF-MST will be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) following an active process of research, discussion and consultation across multiple experts, sectors and stakeholders (Working Group of Experts on MST).
- WORKING TOGETHER: <https://www.unwto.org/news/covid-19-working-together> (here is a list of all partnerships signed within the COVID-19 recovery framework... e.g. ICAO/UNWTO collaboration and JOINT STATEMENT): In the



face of an unprecedented challenge, UNWTO's boost and diversifies tourism's recovery advancing partnerships with UN agencies, international organizations, the private sector and top media to work in a coordinated way to ensure the benefits of tourism are shared widely and fairly.

- [Global Tourism Crisis Committee \(GTCC\)](#): The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has convened a high-level working group, bringing together key UN agencies, the chairs of its Executive Council and Regional Commissions, and private sector leaders to become part of a Global Tourism Crisis Committee (GTCC), as UNWTO prepares the tourism sector for recovery. Tourism is the economic sector that has been hardest hit by COVID-19 and all participants who have accepted the invitation from the UNWTO Secretary-General will take part in the GTCC.

