UN Tourism

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Agenda item 7
Appointment of the Secretary-General for the period 2026-2029 on the recommendation of the Executive Council

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Executive summary

At its 123rd session held in Real Sitio de San Ildefonso, Segovia, Spain, on 30 May 2025, the Executive Council decided by secret ballot to recommend to the General Assembly, at its 26th session, the appointment of Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais (United Arab Emirates) as Secretary-General for the period 2026-2029.

The General Assembly, having before it the recommendation put forward by the Executive Council in its decision 6(CXXIII), is invited to appoint Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais as Secretary-General for the period 2026-2029 in accordance with Article 22 of the Statutes.

DRAFT RESOLUTION[1]

Agenda item 7
Appointment of the Secretary-General for the period 2026-2029
on the recommendation of the Executive Council
(document A/26/7)

The General Assembly,

Having before it Articles 12(c) and 22 of the Statutes and Rules 38(e), 43(1) and 53(1) of its Rules of Procedure,

Having noted the recommendation put forward by the Executive Council in its decision 6(CXXIII),

Decides to appoint Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais as Secretary-General for the period 2026-2029.

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[1] This is a draft resolution. For the final resolution adopted by the Assembly, please refer to the Resolutions document issued at the end of the session.

I. Introduction

1. At its 123rd session, the Executive Council (Real Sitio de San Ildefonso, Segovia, Spain, 29-30 May 2025) was required to recommend to the 26th session of the General Assembly a nominee to the post of Secretary-General for the period 2026-2029 pursuant to Rule 29 of its Rules of Procedure and Articles 12(c) and 22 of the Statutes, in accordance with the rules and procedures established in decision 9(CXXII) adopted at its 122nd session (CE/122/6 rev.2).

2. Having held a vote by secret ballot, the Executive Council decided to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais (United Arab Emirates) as Secretary-General.

II. Recommendation of the Executive Council

3. On the basis of decision 17(XCIV) laying down the rules of procedure for the appointment of a nominee to the post of Secretary-General, the Council held two secret ballots during the meeting in accordance with the guiding principles for the conduct of elections by secret ballot annexed to the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

4. During the first secret ballot among the eligible candidates, Mr. Muhammad Adam (Ghana) received 2 votes, Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais (United Arab Emirates) received 16 votes, Ms. Gloria Guevara (Mexico) received 6 votes, and Mr. Harry Theoharis (Greece) received 11 votes.

5. Since none of the candidates received the required simple majority of votes in the first ballot, a second ballot was held and Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais (United Arab Emirates) received 24 votes and Mr. Harry Theoharis (Greece) received 11 votes.

6. Therefore, Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais (United Arab Emirates) was recommended by the Council as the nominee for the post of Secretary-General for the period 2026-2029 (CE/DEC/6(CXXIII)). The curriculum vitae and statement of policy and management intent of Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais is available as **Annex I** of this document.

III. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

7. The General Assembly, having before it Articles 12(c) and 22 of the Statutes and Rules 38(e), 43(1) and 53(1) of its Rules of Procedure, and on the recommendation put forward by the Executive Council in its decision 6(CXXIII), is invited to appoint Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais as Secretary-General for the period 2026-2029.

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Annex I: Curriculum vitae and statement of policy and management intent of Shaikha Al Nowais

SHAIKHA NASSER AL NOWAIS

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Results-driven leader with extensive experience in hospitality management, business development, corporate governance, communications and stakeholder relations. Currently serving as Corporate Vice President – Owner Relationship Management at Rotana, with a proven track record of strengthening partnerships, optimizing business strategies, and ensuring operational excellence across the hospitality sector while navigating complex business landscapes to drive collaboration between public and private sectors to advocate for industry advancement. Holds multiple board memberships to enhance industry growth, financial sustainability, and policy development.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ROTANA HOTELS MANAGEMENT COMPANY   **Abu Dhabi, UAE**
Corporate Vice President – Owners' Relationship Management   **2018 – Present**

- Established and optimized relationships with 50 property owners utilizing strong communication, credible and trustworthy interactions & proactive problem-solving to support sustainability and foster growth.
- Implemented plans for over 50 hotels while managing promotional expenditures through optimizing the hotels' revenue by efficiently promoting our hotels on a global scale and assuring strategic promotion in all source markets.
- Initiated transparent communication with owners to report on financial results & performance & to advise on key decisions.
- Engaged and collaborated with multiple government entities to promote hotels, establish methods to reduce fees & support performance.
- Analyzed market-related trends to report on competitive analysis and potential opportunities for growth and enhancement.
- Outsourced & repurposed hotel staff during COVID through skills analysis and securing employment with alternative companies such as healthcare call centers and field hospitals to increase employee financial security & talent retention.
- Initiated several projects focused on talent retention, including funds for graduate study scholarships, and implementing succession planning.

SAADIYAT ROTANA RESORT AND VILLAS   **Abu Dhabi, UAE**
Executive Representative -Construction and Operating Phases   **2016– 2018**

- Oversaw the construction of Saadiyat Rotana Resort & Villas to optimize the project life cycle & achieve targets.
- Supervised all contractors and project close-out to guarantee quality and meeting property owners' expectations.
- Assessed complete construction areas to identify snags requiring rectification to drive high-quality construction.
- Reviewed & conducted a comprehensive analysis to advise on tendering operations for the hotel's construction with main contractor, interior designer, cost consultant, project manager & consultant.
- Commissioned a UAE National to produce all the artwork for the hotel to represent Abu Dhabi's wildlife, environment, and culture to enhance its competitive edge and drive the establishment of Saadiyat Rotana's unique selling points.
- Established action plans and engaged with influencers with exposure in the desired market to promote & sell the hotel.
- Assessed financial & operational performance to deliver on monthly budget target, the bank loan & owner's commitments.
- Supervised hotel operating & equipment budget and to ensured correct alternatives resulting in reduced working capital without compromising quality.
- Ensured that right marketing plan was in place to promote the hotel through the most effective channels and sources that catered to all market segments and age groups.
- Identified and negotiated the staff accommodation to ensure that hotel staff have the best quality of life.

ROTANA HOTEL MANAGEMENT COMPANY   **Abu Dhabi, UAE**
Director of Internal Audit   **2012 – 2016**

- Established and oversaw the internal audit functions to provide independent and objective assurance to key stakeholders and the Board.
- Performed audits on procurement processes for several hotels; this included checking compliance with SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures).
- Identified areas within the purchasing department that require improvement & recommended more efficient operations.
- Ensured that the hotels maintain consistent standards across all operating areas (Purchasing, Human Resources, Front Office, and Food & Beverage).
- Facilitated Audit Committee meetings with Rotana's statutory auditor.
- Initiated and executed internal audit strategy to protect reputation & assets and support achieving strategic goals.
- Evaluated & improved the organization's risk management, control and governance processes to support business objectives.
- Consolidated results from a comprehensive risk analysis and engaged with the Audit Committee to develop and execute an annual audit plan to monitor company operations, compliance, and governance.
- Implemented best practices by monitoring audit processes and systems to support compliance with relevant regulations, guidelines, and rules, leading to a workplace culture that drove transparency and accountability.

KPMG LOWER GULF LTD   Abu Dhabi, UAE
Audit Associate II – External & Internal Audit   2008 – 2011

- Audited financial statements and prepared audit plans, programs & strategies and examination of internal controls to assess robustness and efficiency of organizations procedures over various expense accounts.
- Conducted reviews of internal audit reports to identify weaknesses and financial impact on various client operations.
- Performed walk-through tests to understand the client's operations through Completeness, Existence, and Accuracy reviews of debtor balances, operational expenses, sales and receivables, and completion & verification of bank reconciliations.
- Reviewed and verified payroll expense accounts and movement, including end-of-service benefits.
- Assisted with completing business process understanding & facilitated audit committee meetings with statutory auditors.
- Assessed housing allowance allocation for all employees based on staff grade, social status, alignment with internal approval policies, and viability of the residence selected.

LEADERSHIP & BOARD MEMBERSHIPS

Board Member - Abu Dhabi Businesswomen Council & Chamber of Commerce   Abu Dhabi, UAE
                                                                                  2022 – Present
- Provided workshops with subject matter experts to business owners who want to improve and develop their business ideas.

Board Member - Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy, Les Roches   Abu Dhabi, UAE
                                                                                  2024 – Present
- Ensured that the university incorporates best practices into its curriculum so that travelers visiting Abu Dhabi receive genuine service and an authentic Emirati experience to create lasting memories of the destination.
- Engaged subject matter experts from Rotana Hotel Management Company to provide students with real-life case studies that enhance their understanding and application of course material.
- Analyzed the academy's annual budget to ensure efficient allocation of revenue and expenses for a positive investor return.

Board Member – Dubai Chamber Hotel Business Group   Dubai, UAE
                                                                                  2024 – Present
- Shaped strategic initiatives to support the growth and sustainability of Dubai's hospitality sector by aligning with government tourism and economic development goals.
- Collaborated with key stakeholders, including hotel operators, investors, and policymakers, to drive policies that enhance Dubai's global competitiveness as a leading hospitality destination.
- Provided insights and guidance on regulatory frameworks, market trends, and best practices to foster innovation and excellence in the hospitality sector.

Chairwoman – Abu Dhabi Chamber Hotels Business Group   Abu Dhabi, UAE
                                                                                  2024 – Present
- Led the business group in advocating for the hospitality sector in Abu Dhabi to ensure policies and initiatives support sustainable growth and investment in the industry.
- Collaborated with hotels, tourism authorities, and business leaders to enhance Abu Dhabi's positioning as a world-class hospitality hub, integrating cultural and economic objectives.
- Oversaw initiatives that foster Emirati talent in hospitality by enhancing guest experience through authentic service.

Board Member – Al Ahlia Insurance Company (AAIC)   Abu Dhabi, UAE
                                                                                  2024 – Present
- Provided strategic oversight to ensure AAIC leads the UAE insurance market, focusing on financial stability, risk management, and regulatory compliance.
- Contributed to developing innovative insurance products that cater to evolving consumer needs and industry demands, particularly in hospitality, real estate, and corporate sectors.
- Assessed company performance, financial planning, and governance structures to ensure sustainable growth and value creation for shareholders and policyholders.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Tourism Youth Summer Camp organized by the Department of Culture and Tourism   Abu Dhabi, UAE
                                                                                  2022 - 2023
- Judged youth presentations on the use of technology, creativity, communication skills, and ease of implementation.

SKILLS

- **Languages**: Fluent in English & Arabic (speaking, reading, writing).
- **Computer Literacy**: MS Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, MS Teams), Data management, and CRM software.

Shaikha Nasser Al Nowais   30/01/2025

Statement of Policy and Management Intent by the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

As the global tourism sector reaches an unprecedented $11.1 trillion in economic contribution, we stand at a pivotal moment that demands bold and visionary leadership.

This period in time is a testament to resilience and a call for innovative, forward-thinking policies that will shape the future of sustainable and inclusive tourism.

We are witnessing a world where data-driven tools provide significant insights on various aspects that contribute to growth and efficiency across all levels. The wealth of information available enhances all factors that shape and strengthen the tourism industry. This is an opportunity that cannot be neglected and has seen rapid growth that can be utilized if we adopt a proactive approach to harness its potential fully.

As the Secretary-General of UNWTO, I recognize that this growth offers immense opportunities along with heightened responsibilities. It is crucial that we develop strategic frameworks to ensure tourism remains a driver of economic prosperity, cultural exchange, and environmental stewardship. Now, more than ever, we must unite to harness this momentum, driving policies that not only sustain growth but also redefine tourism as a cornerstone of global progress. I believe that understanding the overall market and customer behavior makes a huge difference in shaping the policies. Consequently, it is crucial to examine the historical milestones achieved throughout the years and fully understand the obstacles and challenges typically faced by the industry. We must develop measurable frameworks that sustain the overall ecosystem, ensuring the infrastructure is robust yet adaptable to accommodate any changes that may arise.

I believe our commitment to fostering sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism practices that contribute to global development is the way forward. Our mission is to promote responsible, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism that not only stimulates economic growth but also enriches the cultural and social fabric of communities worldwide.

Sustainability

We will advocate for tourism practices that protect our natural and cultural heritage, ensuring that future generations can experience and benefit from our planet's diverse resources. Initiatives such as eco-friendly resorts and sustainable tourism certifications will be promoted to reduce the environmental impact of tourism activities.

For example, several tourism entities have implemented green practices, including energy-efficient systems, waste reduction programs, and partnerships with local businesses. Numerous entities have hosted events to showcase sustainable initiatives, such as culinary experiences that highlight locally sourced ingredients and sustainable farming practices. These events promote environmental stewardship and provide guests with unique, eco-friendly experiences.

Additionally, hospitality groups have introduced new sustainable and locally sourced offerings in their properties. Guests can enjoy enhanced breakfast spreads sourced directly from organic and local farms. These new offerings are crafted with health and well-being in mind, featuring fresh produce from farm to table, including diverse salad and vegetable options, cage-free eggs sourced from local farms, and a wide selection of vegan items. Such

practices exemplify a commitment to sustainability that can be emulated by the entire industry.

Many tourism entities collaborate with various NGOs to support local communities and protect the environment. For example, they work with organizations to collect used textiles either to recycle or to distribute to people in need a. Other initiatives include collaborating with innovative food waste measurement technologies to help reduce food waste in the tourism industry. Partnerships with foundations focusing on minimizing food loss and waste in the hospitality sector have been established and are crucial in promoting their benefits. In some instances, food waste is being transformed into compost to reduce landfill contributions, which is highly beneficial for the overall environment.

In addition to these efforts, the implementation of renewable energy sources across the hotel industry and tourism sector is essential. Many hotels have installed solar panels, and some utilize 100% renewable energy. Prioritizing energy-efficient lighting solutions, such as switching to LED lights and installing motion sensors, can significantly reduce energy consumption. Smart building systems may also be implemented to further optimize energy usage. Additionally, water conservation measures, such as installing water restrictors in showers and sinks, are now standard in most properties, ensuring a significant reduction in water consumption. To promote the adoption of such measures, an incentive scheme could be established, offering tax discounts for best practices related to sustainable energy-saving initiatives within the tourism industry.

Inclusivity & Capacity Building

We aim to ensure that tourism development is equitable, providing opportunities for all stakeholders, including marginalized communities, women, and youth. Policies that enhance accessibility and inclusivity in tourism services and infrastructure will be promoted. For instance, programs that offer training and employment opportunities to local communities will empower them through skills development and economic participation. Education plays a pivotal role in raising awareness and building human capital within the tourism industry. By involving experts in the field to educate and train the younger generation, we can cultivate a larger group of young ambassadors who represent and promote their destination's culture and traditions. These initiatives can include mentorship programs, workshops, and immersive experiences that provide youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective advocates for their communities. This not only empowers the younger population but also ensures the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage for future generations. Moreover, providing ample employment opportunities within the industry is crucial for its growth and sustainability, as it drives economic development and fosters community engagement.

We are dedicated to enhancing the skills and capacities of tourism professionals and stakeholders through education and training initiatives. This will empower individuals and communities to thrive in a competitive global market. Numerous training programs can be spearheaded, focusing on areas such as hospitality management, customer service excellence, and sustainable tourism practices.

Through these principles, we aim to lead by example, setting a standard for responsible tourism practices worldwide. We invite all stakeholders and partners to join us in our mission,

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as we work collectively to harness the power of tourism for sustainable development, peace, and prosperity for all.

Technology & Innovation

The importance of technology and innovation in driving the future of tourism cannot be overstated. The digital transformation of the industry, including the adoption of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and blockchain technology, can greatly enhance the efficiency and personalization of tourism services. For instance, AI-powered chatbots can provide real-time assistance to travellers, while virtual reality can offer immersive previews of destinations, helping potential tourists make informed decisions. Blockchain technology can ensure secure and transparent transactions, reducing fraud and increasing trust among stakeholders.

Moreover, innovations in hotel cash management solutions and revenue management systems have revolutionized the way hotels operate, ensuring more accurate financial tracking and optimizing pricing strategies to maximize revenue. Cardless entry systems, which utilize mobile devices for secure room access, enhance guest convenience and safety, further enriching the guest experience. Trends data plays a crucial role in understanding customer preferences and behavior, allowing hoteliers to tailor their services to better meet guest expectations. This data-driven approach does not mean replacing human jobs; instead, it integrates technology to support business growth and improve tourism as a whole. By leveraging these technological advancements, the tourism industry can achieve greater efficiency, enhance guest satisfaction, and drive sustainable development.

Cultural Exchange

Promoting cultural exchange through tourism is another compelling topic. Tourism has the power to bridge cultural divides, fostering understanding and respect between different communities. By encouraging tourist interactions with local traditions and customs, we can create meaningful connections and promote global peace. Initiatives such as cultural exchange programs and community-based tourism are instrumental in achieving these goals, allowing travellers to immerse themselves in the authentic lifestyles of their host communities.

The UAE serves as a prime example of successful cultural exchange through tourism. The country has established numerous happiness centers to support the diverse needs of tourists, ensuring a seamless and enriching experience. By incorporating the latest trends and hosting an array of social, cultural, international exhibitions, and educational conferences, the UAE attracts a wide range of visitors, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of its rich cultural heritage.

The UAE's annual calendar is full of cultural events and activities, making it an attractive destination for tourists seeking memorable and educational experiences. By prioritizing cultural exchange, the UAE not only enhances its global standing but also contributes to the promotion of peace and unity on an international scale. This also feeds into the overall cycle of the country's economy, from employment to purchasing power.

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Infrastructure

In the face of global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and geopolitical shifts, we will work towards enhancing the resilience of the tourism sector. This includes promoting innovation, digital transformation, and crisis management strategies to safeguard the industry's future. During recent global challenges, many tourism entities have swiftly adapted by implementing robust health and safety protocols, leveraging technology for contactless services, and diversifying offerings to include long-term stays and remote work-friendly environments.

Public transportation plays a crucial role in connecting tourists to various attractions and ensuring convenient travel within destinations. Enhancing the efficiency and reach of public transport networks, including buses, trams, and trains, will significantly improve the tourist experience.

Connectivity through airports is another critical aspect. By modernizing airport infrastructure, expanding routes, and improving services, we can facilitate smoother travel experiences for international visitors around the globe.

Healthcare systems must also be robust to cater to the needs of tourists. Ensuring accessible and high-quality medical care can encourage confidence among travelers, making destinations more appealing. Additionally, it is essential that health insurance coverage is accessible and affordable for all global citizens, ensuring that tourists are well cared for in case of emergencies.

Education infrastructure, including schools and universities, can contribute to the tourism sector by fostering a knowledgeable workforce and promoting research in tourism development. Additionally, exchange programs can play a vital role in this context by enabling students and professionals to gain international experience and share best practices, further enriching the tourism industry's growth and resilience, ultimately increasing the employment rate.

Safety and security are paramount in ensuring that tourists feel safe and are willing to visit a country. Implementing comprehensive safety measures, such as robust law enforcement, well-maintained public spaces, and effective emergency response systems, can significantly enhance a country's reputation as a secure destination. Moreover, providing clear information about local safety guidelines, health, and travel alerts can build confidence among travelers. Collaborating with international organizations and adopting global standards for safety and security can further reinforce a country's commitment to protecting its visitors, ultimately fostering a welcoming and trustworthy environment for all tourists.

For all the above to be implemented, It is very important to establish collaborations with governments and private sector stakeholders to enhance these infrastructures. By advocating for policies that support public transportation improvements, airport modernization, healthcare accessibility, and educational advancements, and health and safety we can create a more resilient and tourist-friendly environments around the world.

Collaboration

It is of ultimate importance to foster strong partnerships with governments, private sector stakeholders, and local communities to create a unified approach to tourism development.

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Collaborative efforts will be essential in addressing challenges and seizing opportunities in the evolving tourism landscape. For example, entities within the tourism sector can collaborate with local tourism boards, cultural organizations, and other industry players to promote regional attractions, enhance guest experiences, and support local economies.

An integral aspect of these collaborative efforts is the alignment of key stakeholders in the tourism industry such as hotel operators, tourist attractions, airports, and exhibition center regulators. Ensuring that these stakeholders are on the same page is crucial to meeting the destination's vision and achieving cohesive and sustainable tourism development. By working together, these stakeholders can create a seamless and enjoyable experience for tourists while upholding the destination's core values and strategic goals.

Policy & Governance

Finally, the role of policy and governance in shaping a sustainable tourism industry cannot be overlooked. Effective policies and regulations are essential to ensure that tourism development aligns with environmental conservation and social equity. Governments and regulatory bodies must collaborate with industry stakeholders to create frameworks that promote responsible tourism practices. These might include setting limits on tourist numbers in fragile ecosystems, implementing eco-taxes to fund conservation efforts, and establishing standards for sustainable tourism certification.

Through these discussions, we can paint a comprehensive picture of the multifaceted nature of tourism and its potential to drive positive change globally. By addressing technology, cultural exchange, and policy, we can highlight the diverse ways in which tourism contributes to sustainable development and fosters a more connected and equitable world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the multifaceted nature of tourism presents both challenges and immense opportunities. By investing in robust infrastructure such as healthcare, education, safety, and transportation, we can significantly enhance the appeal and resilience of tourist destinations. Collaboration among governments, private sector stakeholders, and local communities is paramount in addressing these challenges and seizing the opportunities within the evolving tourism landscape. Effective policy and governance are crucial in ensuring that tourism development aligns with environmental conservation and social equity.

My extensive experience in tourism development, coupled with my strong background in policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement, positions me as an ideal candidate to contribute to the World Tourism Organization's mission. I am committed to fostering sustainable tourism practices, promoting cultural exchange, and driving positive change globally. By working together, we can shape a tourism industry that respects our planet, benefits all its inhabitants, and paves the way for a more connected and equitable world.

Together, we can seize this opportunity to redefine global tourism, ensuring it is not only economically thriving but also socially inclusive and environmentally responsible.