



UN Tourism Calls on G20 Tourism Ministers to step up collaboration and make tourism a driver of inclusion

Kruger National Park, South Africa, 15 September 2025 – The UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili has stressed that “strengthening multilateralism through tourism will deliver results in socio-economic inclusion, sustainable development, peace and understanding”.

Addressing G20 Tourism Ministers, he commended the South African Presidency’s focus on inclusion and sustainability. “More than a motto, the theme for South Africa’s G20 Presidency “Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability”, reminds us that Equality and Sustainability can only be achieved through targeted policies, unified efforts and mutual support among countries – a recognition that in an interconnected world, the challenges faced by one country can have ripple effects globally,” he said.

The G20 Tourism Ministers Meeting focused on the four priorities of South Africa’s Presidency:

- Enhancing Travel and Tourism Startups and MSMEs through Digital Innovations
- Tourism Financing and Investment to enhance equality and sustainable development.
- Air Connectivity for Seamless Travel
- Enhanced resilience for inclusive, sustainable tourism development

As international tourism continues to grow – international tourist arrivals increased 5% in the first half of 2025 according to the latest World Tourism Barometer – Pololikashvili reaffirmed the critical importance of progressing digital transformation, financing for development, investment and resilient ecosystems in tourism, stressing that there will be no resilience without sustainability.

He called for supporting innovation and stressed that emerging technologies can transform tourism MSMEs, which are the backbone of tourism, but only with adequate financing and programmes to close the digital divide and promote inclusion.

Tourism vital for developing countries

Focusing on financing for development, he noted that though “for many developing countries, including Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, tourism is a major source of employment, foreign exchange and tax revenues. Yet, the sector continues to

be overlooked as a tool for development, with the total Official Development Assistance disbursements for tourism remaining below 0.11% of total ODA.”

Closing, Pololikashvili highlighted South Africa’s G20 Presidency as a show of the continent’s leadership in the global agenda. He recalled that Africa is home to 19% of the world’s population, with 70% of sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30. “The opportunities the continent offers in tourism are many” he said and “unlocking tourism investment and development for jobs and inclusion is a core priority of the UN Tourism Agenda for Africa.”

UN Tourism as Knowledge Partner of South Africa G20 Presidency.

The G20 economies represent around 70% of all international tourist arrivals and exports worldwide and 83% of the world’s tourism’s global GDP. The sector accounted directly for 3.1% of the GDP of the G20 (2023), 5% of all exports of the group and 23% of all its service exports (2024).

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