



UN Tourism Sets Artificial Intelligence Agenda for Sector as General Assembly Concludes in Riyadh

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 10 November 2025 - UN Tourism has successfully concluded the biggest General Assembly in its 50-year history, confirming new leadership, and announcing a shared vision for innovation and Artificial Intelligence.

The 26th session of the UN Tourism General Assembly welcomed delegation from **148 Member States** to Riyadh, including **90 Ministers of Tourism** and 70 Ambassadors. Over three days, the Organization's Member States advanced the shared Programme of Work, setting the course for a more inclusive, innovative and sustainable future.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili says: "As UN Tourism celebrates 50 years, we look ahead to the next half-century. The sector will be transformed by innovation and Artificial Intelligence. We are proud to support the top innovators and to guide our Member States to fully benefit from the power of AI to diversify the sector, drive inclusive growth and expand opportunities for all."

Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence

Reflecting UN Tourism's leading role in advancing innovation and digital transformation of the sector, a special **Thematic Session on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence** brought together public and private sector leaders.

Member States were provided with an overview of the place of AI in the Organization's agenda by Executive Director Natalia Bayona, setting the stage for a policy debate featuring interventions from more than 30 Heads of Delegation or high-level equivalent. Joining Apostolos Tzitzikostas, EU Commissioner for Sustainable Transport & Tourism, were representatives from Amadeus, Trip.com, Microsoft and the World Economic Forum.

In Riyadh, the final of the **UN Tourism Artificial Intelligence Challenge** recognized the innovators leading the way in harnessing the power of new technology to transform the sector. From the finalists, Smart Tour from Brazil was named as the overall winner.

The session concluded with the announcement of the [Riyadh Declaration on the Future of Tourism](#), a shared roadmap to guide the sector's forward. The Declaration underscores

strengthening international cooperation, resilience, and the empowerment of local communities through digital innovation, AI integration, and inclusive tourism economies. Signatories commit to take concrete steps, including incentivizing investment in digital infrastructure, addressing workforce shortages and skills gaps, and taking advantage of technological and AI-driven initiatives to support local entrepreneurship.

New leadership and expanding global presence

On the first day of the General Assembly, Shaikha Al Nowais was confirmed as the new Secretary-General of UN Tourism. Member States formally ratified her nomination, meaning she will be the first woman to lead the United Nations Specialized Agency for tourism in its 50-year history. She will begin her term at the start of 2026.

Also in Riyadh, the General Assembly formally approved the institutionalization of the UN Tourism Africa & Americas Summit as a permanent biennial platform for dialogue and political and technical cooperation between the two regions, as well as the creation of a Mechanism for South-South Cooperation.

The proposal of the Government of China to establish a Regional Office in the city of Shanghai, was also approved by Members.

Looking ahead: Innovation and Education for World Tourism Day

Member States approved the proposals to celebrate World Tourism Day 2026 around the theme of “Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence”, with El Salvador as the official host country. The 2027 celebrations will be held around the theme of “Transforming Tourism through Education”, with Cabo Verde to host.

Finally, Member States voted to hold the 27th edition of the UN Tourism General Assembly in the Dominican Republic.