

Agenda Item 4

Report of the UN Tourism Executive Director – Implementation of the Programme of Work in the Middle East 2025-2026 (Regional and Technical Activities)

Summary:

I. The Regional Report for the Middle East serves as a vital overview of the strategic and operational synergy within the region. It includes the combined UN Tourism activities of the Regional Department for the Middle East at the Headquarters in Madrid, ensuring that the unique needs of Middle Eastern Member States are met with agility in a more close and effective partnership, allowing for tailored technical assistance in all relevant areas.

A. Overview of international trends and outlook in the Middle East

1. According to UN Tourism Barometer, the Middle East recorded 3% growth in 2025. The region virtually reached the mark of 100 million international visitors. Egypt (+20%) saw the highest growth in arrivals in 2025, followed by Jordan (+12%) and Qatar (+4%). Tourism Receipts: more than 150 USD Billion in 2024 (last available data). This represents 39% more arrivals than in 2019, the strongest regional results relative to the pre-pandemic¹.
2. It is worth to mention here some of the factors underpinning this remarkable performance: Visa and travel facilitation measures; as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are set to implement a unified tourist visa, similar to the Schengen visa in Europe, as peer the development of new destinations, investments in new tourism-related projects and the hosting of large events. The stereotypical visitor groups to the region – mainly traders and pilgrims, have become more diverse and now include tourists visiting for leisure, recreation, medical treatment, business and events. Big events including Expo Dubai, Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia and the COP 28 helped drive visitors back to the Middle East.
3. The evolution of the current political situation is a factor to consider in terms of possible disruptions of travel to the Middle East and negative effects on traveller confidence overall.

B. Main challenges and opportunities in the Region affecting the tourism sector

¹ UN Tourism Barometer, https://pre-webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2026-01/World_Tourism%20Barometer_Jan26_excerpt_v2.pdf?VersionId=u75u9KWPa6Dzc2CUHld7AvQ49FYrDTQC

4. Tourism in the Middle East has significant growth potential due to its rich cultural heritage, modern attractions, and unique landscapes. However, it faces various investment challenges that can hinder its progress. Some of the most pressing issues include geopolitical instability, economic volatility, regulatory barriers, skilled labour shortage and diversification needs. Sustained growth depends on the region's ability to modernize its regulatory environment and diversify its offerings. Success will ultimately require a coordinated strategic effort between governments and global investors to build a stable foundation for the industry's future.

Current and future challenges:

5. The tourism sector in the Middle East faces several significant challenges, including economic uncertainty, which impacts travel demand and spending, and geopolitical tensions that can deter tourists and disrupt travel plans. Additionally, the need for sustainable tourism practices to mitigate environmental impacts is increasingly critical. The sector must continuously adapt to rapid technological advancements, requiring ongoing investment in new technologies. Workforce challenges, including shortages and the need for skilled labor, further complicate the industry's growth. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from governments, industry stakeholders, and communities to ensure sustainable development.

6. According to the Survey Findings on Members' Priorities for UN Tourism 2026-2027 Programme of Work (PoW), Middle East Member States identified the following as their most critical challenges for the coming biennium:

- **Human Capital Shortages:** This was ranked as the **#1 priority**. The region faces a massive gap in skilled professionals to staff the "Giga-projects" and luxury expansions currently underway.
- **Education and Skills Development:** Directly linked to the staff shortage, there is an urgent demand for vocational training that meets international hospitality standards.
- **Economic Environment:** Concerns regarding oil price volatility, inflation, and interest rates, which affect long-term infrastructure financing and traveller purchasing power.
- **Increased Regional Competition:** As multiple neighbouring countries launch major tourism visions simultaneously, members expressed a need for better **destination positioning** and product differentiation.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** While the region is a top performer in growth, members cited regional instability as a persistent threat to traveller perception and investment security.

7. According to the most recent UN Tourism Panel of Experts survey, the main obstacles to the full recovery of the tourism industry in 2026 remain elevated travel and tourism costs - particularly high prices for transport and accommodation - alongside the global economic uncertainty, persistent labour shortages, and the increasing impact of extreme weather events linked to climate change. While international tourism has shown strong resilience and continued growth, these factors continue to weigh on consumer confidence and travel demand in certain regions.

8. In 2026, while global tourism continues to expand and international arrivals have largely recovered to - or even surpassed - pre-pandemic levels, ongoing geopolitical tensions, including in the Middle East, still shape travel patterns and perceptions. According to the latest UN Tourism Barometer, international tourism showed resilience with growth in arrivals and strong demand throughout 2025, despite economic and geopolitical headwinds such as elevated travel costs and uncertainty in certain regions - highlighting that geopolitical unrest can continue to make both business and leisure travel more complex and uncertain. These tensions influence traveller confidence, insurance conditions, and destination choices, and when combined with broader challenges like labour shortages and inflationary pressures, they affect the performance of tourism sectors in many Member States.

9. Environmental challenges such as desertification, rising temperatures, and overdevelopment threaten the region's fragile ecosystems, which are key attractions for tourists. Scientists have warned that extreme heat and dust storms could eventually exceed the threshold of comfort for

summer tourism. Future success will depend on "indoor-outdoor" architectural innovation and shifting to sustainable, low-carbon transport. The major implications for these changes include increased water scarcity, sea level rise, coral bleaching, algal blooms and extreme weather events.

10. AI-Driven Misinformation: As the region leans into AI for personalization, it also faces "misinformation crises" where AI-generated fake news about security or health can spread rapidly, impacting traveller sentiment in hours.

Opportunities:

The Middle East in 2026 combines rich heritage, modern innovation, and strategic investments positioning it as a dynamic and competitive tourism region with long-term growth potential.

11. The Middle East continues to present strong and diverse opportunities for tourism growth in 2026. According to the latest UN Tourism Barometer data, international arrivals in the Middle East increased steadily throughout 2025, reflecting continued recovery and sustained global interest in the region. The area remains one of the fastest-growing tourism destinations worldwide, contributing significantly to economic diversification, job creation, and cultural exchange across Member States.

12. A major milestone in 2026 is the long-awaited opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza, set to become the world's largest archaeological museum. This landmark attraction, showcasing thousands of ancient Egyptian artifacts, is expected to draw millions of visitors and significantly boost Egypt's tourism revenues, enhance its cultural diplomacy, and reaffirm its position as a global heritage destination.

13. Beyond cultural tourism, governments across the region continue to invest heavily in infrastructure, easing visa regulations and promoting diversified tourism products. Countries such as Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are focusing on sports, adventure, and eco-tourism, offering experiences like desert safaris, diving, and hiking, alongside high-end resorts and urban attractions. The legacy of mega-events like EXPO 2020 Dubai and the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar continues to enhance the region's global profile and travel appeal.

14. National tourism plans with a clear vision and goals must be developed; effective governance has to be ensured in aligning the functions of all public sectors with these plans; new source tourist markets need to be identified to complement existing ones; destinations should be ready with appropriate infrastructure and services, and marketing campaigns need to be designed to connect with the target markets. Furthermore, sustainability, innovation and technology are instrumental to the entire process. Providing value-added services that accurately meet demand will help attract higher value tourists and foster repeat visitors.

15. Through continuous relations with each and every Member State, as well as with the Affiliate Members of the Middle East, UN Tourism aims to ensure a fair, yet strategic, geographically balanced distribution of its activities in the region. Its programme of activities in the region is built around the following five strategic priorities, which are also part of the SDG's:

- Make tourism smarter: innovation and the digital transformation SDGs 8, 9, 10 and 17
- Grow our competitive edge: investments and entrepreneurship SDGs 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17
- Create more and better jobs: education and employment SDGs 4, 8, 10 and 17
- Build resilience and facilitate travel: safe, secure and seamless travel SDGs 3, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 16
- Protect our heritage: social, cultural and environmental sustainability SDGs 8, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16

16. By resolution A/RES/757(XXV), the UN Tourism General Assembly approved the Draft Programme of Work, structured around three strategic objectives and five programmatic priorities, as follows:

- a. **Objective 1:** Become the most influential tourism organization, through advocacy, knowledge creation, policy guidance and diversification of services;
- b. **Objective 2:** Expand the Organization's membership. Increase resources, capacity and ownership, through strategic partnerships;
- c. **Objective 3:** Transform the Organization for a better future. More agile and effective governance. Embracing UN values and multilateralism for realizing the 2030 Agenda;
- d. **Priority 1:** Enhance competitiveness: robust tourism statistics and UN standards, data and market intelligence, rethink destination positioning and product development;
- e. **Priority 2:** Foster sustainability and inclusiveness: circularity, climate action, and biodiversity. Reduce inequalities and promote culture;
- f. **Priority 3:** Invest in people: reinforce education and training, strengthen human capital for decent work;
- g. **Priority 4:** Boost investment & Scale up innovation: access to finance, accelerate the uptake of new business models;
- h. **Priority 5:** Build better and strong institutions: tourism policy, governance, and resilience.
foundations, improving communication, strengthening collaboration, upskilling, and keeping sustainability

Priority 1: Enhance competitiveness

A. Data to empower tourism:

17. **Tourism Statistics Database:** over 300 key tourism statistics collected on: inbound, outbound and domestic tourism, tourism industries, employment in tourism, trade-based indicators, SDG indicators, and Tourism GDP and value added

- Adoption of a new tourism employment indicator (8.9.2) to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the UN Statistical Commission: for the first time—global data on tourism employment monitored within the SDG monitoring process.
- UN Statistical Commission side event “The 2025 SDG Indicator Review: Enhancing the Global Monitoring Framework for Greater Impact” (February 2025).
- Annual Contribution to UN SG's Progress Report on SDGs, UN SDG Report, and the UN SDG Global database.
- New statistical dataset on tourism employment, in collaboration with ILO.
- Launch of the modernization of the UN Tourism Statistics Database
- Tailored interactive visual tourism flow chart that includes the top 10 intra-African destinations.

18. Towards a global urban tourism database: UN Tourism and the World Tourism Cities Federation (WCTF) launched during ITB, Berlin, a joint report highlighting the need to measure the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism in urban destinations and create a global benchmark for the development of urban tourism. **Cities in the Middle East include Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the Emirates, Muscat in Oman and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia.**

19. **Tourism Data and market intelligence:** Since the 2025 Regional Commission for the Middle East, four issues of the World Tourism Barometer have been released: May, September and November 2025 issues, and January 2026 issue.

- 2025 editions of UN Tourism Highlights
- Monthly updates and annual data and insights in the UN Tourism Dashboards
- Visa: Openness index and digital nomads report

- Data Lab Initiative: cooperation with the European Travel Commission (ETC): five technical webinars + 1 event
- Series of reports with Amadeus on tourism insights and trends in the regions of the Americas, Asia and the Pacific and Europe.
- Key cooperations: Amadeus, Travel Insights Reports for Europe, the America and Asia Pacific, Forecast for ASEAN Tourism Outlook 2025- 2030
- Affiliate Members Podcast: On the go.

UN Tourism Data Dashboard

The UN Tourism Data Dashboard provides monthly and yearly data and insights. It covers key indicators for inbound and outbound tourism at the global, regional and national levels including international tourist arrivals, tourism receipts, tourism share of exports, seasonality, contribution to GDP as well as data on air transport, occupancy rates, short term rentals demand and travel sentiment. Aggregated data is included for the Middle East as well as for the Gulf Cooperation Countries.

B. Product Development:

20. Gastronomy:

- Publications: *A Tour Around The World's Gastronomy* including Bahrain and Oman.

21. UN Tourism and the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) signed an MoU, in preparation for the 3rd World Sports Tourism Congress. It was signed during the Formula 1 Grand Prix weekend in Monza, Italy. FIA President, Mohammed Ben Sulayem has been appointed as UN Tourism's Ambassador for Sustainable Tourism, in the category of "Sport". Both parties agreed to create the UN Tourism FIA Working Group on Sports Tourism to advance and raise awareness on the potential of this tourism product.

C. Destination management

22. The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, UAE, joined other Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) awarded with the UN Tourism.QUEST Certification which recognizes quality and excellence in Destination Management Organizations.

D. Tourism for Rural Development and Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism:

23. **Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism:** In its fifth edition, the winners from the Middle East were: **Masfout, United Arab Emirates and North Azraq, Jordan. Additionally, 20 villages have been selected to participate in the Upgrade Programme this year including from the Middle East: Al-Bashandi Village, Egypt, Iraq Al-Amir, Jordan.**

More information on the 2025 BTV edition can be found here: <https://www.untourism.int/news/un-tourism-announces-best-tourism-villages-2025-52-communities-leading-tourism-for-rural-development>

24. The call for submissions for the sixth edition will take place in the first quarter of 2026, opening a new opportunity for rural destinations to share their inspiring initiatives and get global recognition as tourism for rural development champions.

25. BTV Network – The Knowledge Series: UN Tourism launched the quarterly The Knowledge Series – Learn from the Experts, designed to provide the BTV Network expert-led guidance to help local stakeholders develop tailored and sustainable tourism solutions. Three sessions were organized in 2025, gathering over 150 participants from 30+ countries including participants from the Middle East. The sessions focused on Implementing National Sustainability Goals at the Village Level in collaboration with Green Destinations (February), Intellectual Property for Rural

Identity in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO (May), and presented also the Self-Assessment Tool to Assist Rural Destinations (STAR) by UN Tourism featuring a guest speaker from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism of Peru (August)..

26. **BTV Network – Village Talks:** The *Village Talks – Voices from the Ground* public webinar series was launched to increase visibility and outreach of good practices by the Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism. Four sessions were organized in 2025 bringing together more than 350 participants from 45+ countries include frequent participation from the Middle East. These include [Heritage in Action: Innovating Cultural Preservation in Villages](#) (April), [Tourism for Nature: Conserving Natural Resources through Sustainable Rural Development](#) (July), [Cultivating Heritage: Agritourism Experiences in GIAHS Villages](#) (September), and [Strengthening Communities: People-Centered Approaches to Rural Tourism](#) (December). These webinars provide a platform for villages to share practical examples of tourism-driven rural development and best practices, enhancing international visibility.

27. In May 2025, UN Tourism partnered with HSLU - Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, engaging 27 undergraduate students from seven countries in a collaborative research project as part of their academic coursework. The students conducted in-depth studies for five BTVs, one of them Misfat Al Abriyeen, Oman. Each group focused on a different BTV, exploring the challenges and opportunities related to tourism development in rural settings. The initiative proved valuable for both the students and the BTVs, offering meaningful insights and increased visibility for all stakeholders involved.

27. In September 2025, alongside the Director of the Regional Office for the Middle East, the Coordinator of the Tourism for Rural Development Programme joined a mission to the province of Aseer, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to conduct a technical site-visit and stakeholder meetings to understand the rural tourism strategy of the region and explore future partnership opportunities. Also, a recognition plate was handed over ceremoniously to the Best Tourism Village “Abo Noghta Castles and Historic Tabab”.28. In January 2026, UN Tourism hosted as session on “Tourism for Rural Development: Creating Jobs and Inclusive Growth for Rural Communities” in the framework of the Global Labour Market Conference, which took place in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The session consisted of a keynote, fireside chat, and a panel discussion including high-level representatives from UNESCO, World Bank, the Embassy of Sri Lanka to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as UnTours Foundation. The role of the Tourism for Rural Development Programme was highlighted and promoted.

29. In September 2025, the Arabic versions of the reports [Tourism and Rural Development: A Policy Perspective and Tourism](#) and [Rural Development: Understanding Challenges on the Ground – Lessons learned from the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Initiative](#) were launched, expanding outreach in the Middle East.

30. In November 2025, the [Tourism for Rural Development Impact Report](#) has been updated to include the activities of 2025. The report was updated and printed ahead of the General Assembly of UN Tourism that took place in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

31. The discussions were initiated regarding “Qatar Farm Tourism Development Program”, aiming to develop world-class agri-tourism experiences by leveraging UN Tourism expertise and experience and Qatar tourism standards.

Training:

32. UN Tourism follows a **360-degree approach** to tourism education, ensuring that learning opportunities are accessible at all levels. This comprehensive strategy encompasses **secondary education, higher education, executive education, online learning, and International Academies**. Our commitment is to provide a seamless learning journey for all stakeholders involved in tourism development. (more resources are available on: ([UN Tourism Education | UN Tourism](#))

E. Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness (CTC):

33. The Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness (CTC) met in person in its 17th Meeting on 7 November 2025 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia during the 26th session of the General Assembly and in its 18th Meeting (hybrid mode) which took place on 20 January 2026 in Madrid, Spain, during

FITUR. Lebanon participated in both meetings as member of the CTC and contributed to the preparation of the work plan of the CTC for the period 2026-2027.

More information on the CTC and its members is available here: <https://www.untourism.int/governing-bodies/competitiveness-committee>.

F. Resilience and governance

34. Launch of the Tourism Law Observatories (Resolution 757(XXV), recently being established in the Middle East.

35. UN Tourism is revolutionizing governance in the tourism sector by promoting sustainable, inclusive, and resilient practices. As the leading international organization in tourism, UN Tourism focus is on people and planet, emphasizing community engagement, environmental protection, and social inclusion. Key initiatives include developing Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks, guiding principles for sustainable investment, and supporting regenerative tourism in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). By fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, UN Tourism aims to make tourism a driver of economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction, while preserving cultural and natural heritage.

Priority 2: Foster sustainability and inclusiveness: circularity, climate action, and biodiversity. Reduce inequalities and promote culture”

36. The International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) is a leading and growing initiative of destinations committed to sustainable tourism development based on participatory approaches, evidence and transparency. We encourage Member States to join INSTO network and to participate in the webinars organized by the network to share their experiences and lessons learned and to benefit from their publications.

37. INSTO organised 18 technical webinars, which showcased the experiences, management practices and monitoring efforts of its members and selected experts in the eleven key measurement areas. These webinars are essential tools and resources for destinations committed to sustainability.

38. Climate action: Climate change poses one of the most significant threats to sustainable development, with the tourism sector both impacted by and contributing to global greenhouse gas emissions. Following the Azerbaijan COP29 Declaration on Enhanced Climate Action in Tourism and recognizing the urgent need for coordinated efforts to enhance climate action in tourism, Brazil proposes the creation of an Interinstitutional Working Group on Tourism and Climate Action. This initiative will strengthen partnerships, align strategies, and accelerate the implementation of climate-resilient and low-carbon tourism policies and practices. The Interinstitutional Working Group on Tourism and Climate Action was established by the Executive Council through decision 12(CXXIII), adopted at its 123rd session on 31 May 2025. more information about the working Group is available on https://pb.untourism.int/assets/docs/CE124_03_Report_WG_Climate_Action_and_Committee_Merit_and_Excellence_En.pdf.

39. Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST): The Statistical Framework (SF) for MST is an internationally agreed framework describing the main concepts, definitions and data organization structures to support the production and organization of data on the impacts and dependencies of tourism on the economy, society and the environment. UN Tourism is currently leading the development of an agreed set of indicators derived from the SF-MST for international comparability purposes with the view to initiate an international dataset and country reporting. To date, 31 countries and sub-national destinations have implemented an MST pilot. These include from the Middle East; Egypt, Saudi Arabia.

- Participation at the DGINS (Directors General of National Statistical Institutes) Conference, the first ever edition on tourism statistics (October 2025, Croatia).

- 4 agreements (sponsorship agreement with easyJet Holidays, UN-to UN agreement with the International Labour Organization, partnership agreement with the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, contract with the University of Oxford).
- Promotion of the MST and ESG initiatives in 20+ events.

The development of the SF-MST has benefited from the experience of 29 pilots (including Middle East countries) and multiple rounds of consultation. The publication “Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism: Learnings from Pilots”, was launched at the Symposium on MST country experiences. 7 countries from the Middle East region (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates) were featured as a best practice.

40. In the same context, many projects have been conducted over the last years, especially the Evaluation of Tourism Statistics System, Phase II, (KSA) and the Assessment of the Tourism Statistics for the Compilation of TSA for the UAE (ongoing until 2026), while further discussions are ongoing for the implementation of the following:

- Statistics Summit and working Group Meeting
- Improving the Statistical system in Kuwait;
- Familiarization with MST standards for all Member States of the region.

41. Gender equality and women’s empowerment: Series of webinars on the theme “Invests in women: Accelerate progress” in different world regions including Middle East for International Women’s Day 2024. The 'Gender Equality in Tourism Training' course updated with new branding ready for future promotion.

42. Following the success of the global Centre Stage Project, including the project in Jordan, we encourage our Member States in the Middle East to duplicate this project in their countries.

Priority 3: Invest in people: inforce education and training, strengthen human capital for decent work:

43. More than 4,000 people were trained since 2019 by the UN Tourism Academy with the support of Andorra through 90 initiatives delivered in over 25 countries, using 10 tailored formats ranging from workshops and masterclasses to postgraduate programmes and consultancies. Programmes in six languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, French, and Arabic).

2024: • Saudi Arabia, Tourism Faculty Development Programme, 312 participants.

2025: • Saudi Arabia, Faculty Exchange Programme, in collaboration with Les Roches, 60 participants.

- Co-branding the Designing Culinary Experiences programme of Basque Culinary Centre, 4 full scholarships.

- Co-branding the Cornell Sustainable Tourism Destination online course with 350 scholarships delivered.

44. UN Tourism also published the “Education Toolkit for the incorporation of tourism as a subject in high schools”. This will equip countries with resources to integrate tourism seamlessly into curricula, fostering early interest and understanding of tourism careers amongst students. It is now actionable as per the request of Member States to create a curated implementation plan based on any of the three leading methodologies: International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI) or Cambridge Assessment International Education. Discussions are being held with Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia (Zagreb), the United Arab Emirates and Zambia.

45. The UN Tourism Online Academy: Launched in 2019, has become the leading platform for online education in tourism and hospitality with over 40,000 users and 50 selfpaced high-quality courses. Additional thematic areas, languages, and scholarships will be made available worldwide.

- The Academy saw an expansion with a focus on delivering courses in Arabic in 2025.
- Support for the **Riyadh School of Tourism and Hospitality** to serve as a regional centre of excellence for vocational training.
- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on AI and Innovation.

- The Faculty Exchange Programme for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in collaboration with Les Roches, was launched, in the framework of the e-Learning Agreement.
- The implementation of the **Education Toolkit** for tourism in high schools was recently piloted in the UAE.

46. Quality continues to be a main pillar. The UN Tourism TedQual Certification network gathers hundreds of certified programmes from several institutions worldwide. Middle East (1.35%). The following Education and Training Institutions whose programmes have been certified / renewed or are going through the process October-December 2025:

- The University of Jordan Jordan 1 CERTIFIED.
 - Bunyan Academy Saudi Arabia 1 CERTIFIED.
 - University of Hail Saudi Arabia 1 CERTIFIED.
 - Umm Al-Qura University Saudi Arabia 4 CERTIFIED.
 - Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University Saudi Arabia 4 CERTIFIED.
 - Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University Applied College Saudi Arabia 4 CERTIFIED.
 - King Khalid University Saudi Arabia 1 CERTIFIED.
 - The Applied College at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University Saudi Arabia 1 CERTIFIED.
 - Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University Saudi Arabia 4 CERTIFIED.
 - Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University Applied College Saudi Arabia 4 CERTIFIED.
 - King Khalid University Saudi Arabia 1 CERTIFIED.
 - Technical and Vocational Training Corporation - TVTC Saudi Arabia 4 CERTIFIED.
- Certification Renewal:
- Royal Academy of Culinary Arts Jordan 1 RENEWED.
 - The Applied College at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University Saudi Arabia 1 The certification renewal process is in progress.
 - Technical and Vocational Training Corporation - TVTC Saudi Arabia 4 The certification renewal process is in progress.
 - Saudi Culinary Arts Academy - ZADK Saudi Arabia 1 The certification renewal process is in progress.
 - King Saud University - KSU Saudi Arabia 1 The certification renewal process is in progress.
 - Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University - IAU Saudi Arabia 1 The certification renewal process is in progress.
 - 7. King Khalid University - KKU Saudi Arabia 1 The certification renewal process is in progress.

47. UN Tourism Academy carried out different Executive Education programmes: (a) Tourism Faculty Development Programme for Saudi Arabia. It featured 12 online modules with the participation of 312 people in four different tracks: academic managers, tourism faculty, hospitality faculty, and education & training evaluators (January – September 2024). In 2025, Faculty Exchange Programme, in collaboration with Les Roches, had 60 participants from Saudi Arabia.

48. Additionally, UN Tourism is currently working on the creation of an international PhD programme on Tourism Law, in collaboration with La Sorbonne University (France) and the University of Salamanca (Spain).

49. Saudi Arabia: At its 123rd session, the Executive Council approved the establishment of the Tourism Law Observatory for the Middle East through decision 3 (CXXIII). The Observatory is now being set up within the framework of the Regional Office for the Middle East. Building on the

successful model of the LAC Tourism Law Observatory, the Middle East Observatory will replicate and adapt key features, such as a legal database, resources and reports on tourism legislation, an interactive learning platform, and a regional academic network, tailored to the specific legal frameworks, priorities, and needs of the Middle East region. To this end, the Secretariat is currently working on adapting the Observatory's digital platform to the Arabic language. Furthermore, a formal call for the pre-selection of academic collaborators from Middle East Member States will be launched shortly

50. The project Human Capital Development by E-Learning with Saudi Arabia has achieved:

(a) Growth of the UN Tourism Online Academy portfolio with 10 additional courses.

(b) The TedQual auditing procedure in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has kicked off and is completed with 5 top Saudi universities to be certified tourism programmes. Additionally, due to the substantial interest of TedQual being the benchmark standard for tourism programmes in the country, another 5 Saudi universities are going through the auditing procedure to be certified. The following programmes have been certified: Bachelor of Travel and Tourism Management – King Abdulaziz University (Saudi Arabia)

- Bachelor of Hospitality Management – King Abdulaziz University (Saudi Arabia)
- Bachelor of Event Management – King Abdulaziz University (Saudi Arabia)
- Diploma in Culinary Arts – King Abdulaziz University (Saudi Arabia)
- Diploma in Tourism and Entertainment Projects Management – The Applied College at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (Saudi Arabia)
- Diploma of Culinary Arts – Saudi Academy of Culinary Arts – ZADK (Saudi Arabia)
- Bachelor in Tourism and Hotel Management – King Saud University (Saudi Arabia)
- BA in Tourism and Heritage Management – Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (Saudi Arabia)
- Food Production (Cooking), Diploma – Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, AlMadinah (Saudi Arabia). Events Management, Diploma – Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, AlMadinah (Saudi Arabia)
- Events Management, Diploma – Females' Technical College in Abha (Saudi Arabia)
- Events Management, Diploma – Females' Technical College in Hail (Saudi Arabia)
- Events Management, Diploma – Females' Technical College in Taif (Saudi Arabia).
- Hajj and Umrah Services, Diploma – Females' Technical College in Makkah (Saudi Arabia)
- Tour Guidance, Diploma – Females' Technical College in Tabuk (Saudi Arabia)

(c) Tourism Labour Market Observatory: aims to promote the creation of value-added jobs through capacity building and workforce skills analysis in the Kingdom. To achieve this goal, UN Tourism is committed to producing two comprehensive reports: an AI Impact Analysis on Tourism Jobs and Digitalization and the Future of Tourism, as well as a Comprehensive Tourism Labour Market Report.

(d) Important upgrades in the platform through the implementation of Artificial Intelligence features like AI Tutor and AI Feedback Tool.

51. Regarding the creation of International Academies, **the Riyadh School of Tourism and Hospitality in collaboration with UN Tourism** is advancing in its mission of promoting the creation of new innovative tourism programmes within its territory and providing continuous mentorship for Saudi research initiatives.

Priority 4: Boost investment & Scale up innovation: access to finance, accelerate the uptake of new business models:

Investments in tourism:

52. Tourism investments have become one of the most important strategic priorities for countries around the world. The Middle East saw between 2019 and 2024 the announcement of 279 FDI greenfield projects in the tourism sector, amounting to an announced total CAPEX of USD 13.1 billion, meaning an average of USD 46.8 million per project, expected to create over 30,000 jobs.

- UN Tourism's Ministerial Roundtable on Investment in Tourism, was held in the framework of Abu Dhabi Annual Investment Congress (AIM) 2025 editions with a view to UN Tourism visibility and Know-how sharing, mainly to:
 - Highlight the crucial role of governments in creating and implementing effective policies that foster tourism investment.
 - Identify challenges in current tourism policies and regulations that hinder investment and propose solutions for overcoming them.
 - Explore how governments can streamline regulatory processes to make the investment climate more transparent, predictable, and accessible to both domestic and international investors.
 - Examine the alignment of tourism investment policies with national development goals, including sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience. Facilitate the exchange of best practices from governments that have successfully designed and implemented effective tourism investment frameworks.

53. In this same vein, UN Tourism strengthens collaboration with a variety of stakeholders to leverage the region's value proposition through two main ways of action. As a demonstration of this commitment, the Annual Investment Forum (AIM) 2024 of the Emirates recognized the Organization as a **strong international partner**.

a) **Knowledge creation and investment promotion through reports and guidelines:** crafting informative materials aimed at guiding potential investors and policymakers. These resources facilitate informed decision-making processes and contribute to the promotion of economic development.

- Meanwhile **Tourism Doing Business – Investment Guidelines** expects to launch more publications during the year (Oman), Saudi Arabia investments guidelines were already issued by the end of 2025.

b) **Investment Fora and Capacity Building:** participation in both our own forums and key investment events continues to expand as part of UN Tourism active role in shaping traditional and non-traditional investments on the Middle East agenda.

- UN Tourism Forum "Investing in Tourism: Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainable Financing" (23 May 2024, Muscat, Oman).

54. Technical assistance on investments: UN Tourism is currently intensifying its collaborative efforts with key strategic partners among others like WAIPA, IFC, UNCTAD, UNIDO, CAF and the World Free Zones Organization. Additionally, the Organization is engaging with regional entities such as COMESA to bolster tourism investments. These partnerships aim:

- a) to enhance the scope and impact of tourism-related projects and initiatives, providing comprehensive support to member states.
- b) to create a more conducive environment for tourism development, enabling member states to tap into new investment opportunities and drive sustainable growth in the sector.
- c) to enhance policy formulation and implementation, ensuring that tourism investments contribute significantly to economic diversification and resilience.

d) to facilitate access to financing and advisory services, crucial for the implementation of large-scale tourism infrastructure projects and the green transformation of the sector.

Innovation in tourism:

55. Middle East is a key player in the tourism global entrepreneurship ecosystem, standing out with the 12.29% of the total of the UN Tourism Top 350 innovators, especially from Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt.

56. **Contribution to the Electronic Voting Platform:** To streamline the decision-making process and increase the efficiency of discussions within the UN Tourism, an Agreement with the UAE for the sponsorship of the implementation and maintenance of a Mobile Application integrated platform was signed in June 2024. The platform includes an electronic voting system for the Organization that would be available at the meetings of its Governing Bodies (the General Assembly and the Executive Council) and its subsidiary organs. It also offers other features such as documentation management, online registration process and interactive communication between participants, among other features. The adoption of the new electronic platform sponsored by UAE further underscores UN Tourism's commitment to the digital transformation of every part of the tourism ecosystem, as well as its ongoing focus on promoting innovation and modernizing its processes. The UAE is pleased to commit to covering the costs associated with the implementation of an electronic voting system.

57. The Artificial Intelligence agenda in tourism: UN Tourism now leads the agenda on Artificial Intelligence in the sector by reflecting on the key role of technology for travel facilitation, boosting impact and addressing ethical and market competition gaps.

The 2025 Riyadh Declaration, adopted at the 26th UN Tourism General Assembly, serves as a 50-year roadmap focusing on sustainable, AI-driven, and inclusive global tourism. It prioritizes digital transformation, investment in human capital, and environmental protection to ensure tourism remains a long-term economic driver. 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.

58. The first-ever Wellness Tourism Workshop in the Middle East organized by UN Tourism in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism of Saudi Arabia. The two-day event (9–10 September) brought together representatives from National Tourism Administrations and Organizations (NTAs/NTOs) from 12 Middle East Member States, alongside Affiliate Members, industry experts and key stakeholders from across the region. The workshop explored the growing potential of wellness tourism as a driver of economic growth, tourism diversification, and sustainability for the Middle East. The event responded to the priorities outlined by Member States during the 50th and 51st Meetings of the UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Middle East, particularly in the areas of capacity building and product diversification.

59. On the other hand, the Middle East stood out in global initiatives:

Innovation Events in the Region:

- In 2025, during the 26th UN Tourism's General Assembly in Riyadh, the Grand Finale of the **Artificial Intelligence Startup Challenge** highlighted some of the most promising innovators in tourism. Among the finalists was EyeGo, an emerging startup from UAE and Saudi Arabia. This startup showcased cutting-edge AI solutions designed to transform the tourism experience in hotels.

- The **UN Tourism Innovation Network**, that gathers over 400 startups and scale-ups from more than 150 countries, has 18 startups from UAE (4,5%).
- UN Tourism participation as speaker/moderator at the **Arabian Travel Market (ATM)**. It is considered as an annual opportunity to jointly organize with ATM and the UAE Ministry of Economy and Tourism a Ministerial summit, as in previous editions in 2015 and 2017.
- Bringing together professionals and industry leaders and stakeholders, ATM provides a platform for networking, knowledge sharing, and business opportunities, allowing participants to explore the latest trends, innovations, and developments worldwide.

Priority 5: Build better and strong institutions: tourism policy, governance and resilience.

International Development and Cooperation

60. UN Tourism executed several projects focusing on key areas such as master planning, investment models, marketing, sustainable tourism governance and management, tourism clustering, human resources strategy, statistics development (TSA and dashboards), quality standards (hotel classification), women empowerment, and award scheme development. The following initiatives represent our strategic footprint in the Middle East, including both completed projects and future deployments:

- **Completed projects:**
 - **Oman – Revision of the Hotel Classification Scheme**
 - **Partner:** Ministry of Heritage and Tourism
 - **Donor:** Ministry of Heritage and Tourism
 - **Key Steps:**
 - Agreement signed in November 2022
 - An initial assessment of the status of quality services in tourism accommodation establishments was conducted.
 - The outcome of the assignment was a project document for the development of the hotel classification scheme which was approved by the Ministry.
 - **Remarks:**
 - The project document includes the work plan for the development of an efficient and competitive hotel classification scheme for the country based on international best practices.
 - Ongoing follow up with the Ministry for the implementation of the hotel classification scheme including: detailed review of the current scheme, introducing the new scheme, official launch of the new scheme, capacity building, introduce the new software.
 - **Qatar - Organizing Qatar Tourism Awards- Third Edition –2025**
 - **Partner:** Qatar Tourism (QT)
 - **Donor:** Qatar Tourism
 - **Remarks:** The categories of the Awards have been updated to better align with emerging tourism trends, while still honouring the traditions and authenticity of Qatari culture.
 - **Key Steps:**
 - The Agreement was signed in 2025.
 - the application portal was launched in May, and the final ceremony was held in October 2024

Remarks: UN Tourism engaged with Qatar Tourism in the organization of Qatar Tourism Awards the first, second and third edition. Additionally, a framework agreement is expected to be signed soon that will cover the collaboration third, fourth and fifth editions until 2027.

- **Saudi Arabia - Evaluation of Tourism Statistics System 2020 – 2023**
 - **Partner:** Ministry of Tourism of Saudi Arabia
 - **Donor:** Ministry of Tourism of Saudi Arabia
 - **Key Steps:**
- Evaluation of the full process of tourism data analysis while strengthening the capacity to implement a model for data processing and gaining knowledge on statistical methodology and research.
- Remaining project balance of approx. 67,000 USD. Follow up with Minister of Tourism or key Ministry Officials on potential follow-on activity/project.

Ongoing projects:

- **Jordan - Formulation of an HR Strategy:**
 - **Partner:** Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
 - **Donor:** remaining balance of EBRD Project
 - **Key Steps:**
 - The development of highly skilled and well-trained human resources in the public and private sectors to develop, manage, and serve the tourism sector in a sustainable and competitive manner, and in accordance with international standards.
 - A meeting with the Member State is foreseen for next steps.
- **Egypt: Ensuring a sustainable tourism future for Egypt: heat resilience and institutional resilience through a capacity-building platform**

Partner:: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
Donor: Egypt Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
Key Steps:
Ongoing discussion with the Ministry.
The Project outline has been shared and awaiting the Ministry's feedback.
- **UAE - Improving and strengthening the National Tourism Statistical System, and compilation of TSA Tables.**
 - **Partner:** Ministry of Economy
 - **Donor:** Ministry of Economy
 - **Remarks:**
 - Phase III and Phase IV focus on developing and implementing visitor and establishment surveys and compiling the TSA and will be launched when the Ministry has made the necessary preparations to undertake the survey.
 - **Key Steps:**
 - - Phase I -Revision- commenced in December 2021 with an initial scoping exercise of all the tourism statistical processes in UAE.
 - Phase II of the project conducted during 2022 and included modifying and strengthening certain statistical processes.

Political visits and bilateral meetings in the Middle East region and key outcomes:

61. UN Tourism former Secretary-General addressed the 26th session of the UN Tourism General Assembly in Riyadh in November 2025, underlining innovation and education as key pillars of UN Tourism's strategy. He pointed to the Regional Office for the Middle East, based in Riyadh, as a "true hub for supporting new talent and growing new ideas," and noted that the Assembly's Thematic Session on Artificial Intelligence will address "the most pressing topic for our sector today." He also recognised Saudi Arabia's contribution to advancing tourism education globally.

62. During Fitur 2026, the new Secretary-General held a series of successful meetings with UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Syria:

- UAE-UN Tourism Partnership: A standout moment was the meeting between the UAE Minister of Economy and Tourism and the UN Tourism Secretary-General. They focused on:
 - Implementing smart and sustainable tourism solutions.
 - Enhancing tourism education and vocational training to build a skilled regional workforce.
 - Promoting new, emerging destinations within the Emirates to diversify the tourism offer.
- The discussion between the Secretary-General and the Egyptian Minister of Tourism was focused on a pilot project in the Middle East region for data collecting. This data-driven approach involves gathering, analysing, and distributing vast amounts of data to support real-time, informed decision-making.
- FITUR served as a precursor to the upcoming 52nd UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Middle East (chaired and hosted by Kuwait in February 10-12, 2026), where the focus is on "Promoting Tourism Through Artificial Intelligence." The hosting Agreement was signed by Kuwait during the meeting with the Secretary-General. UN Tourism is engaged to provide technical assistance in statistics, hotel classification, and a tailor-made tour-guide training. The Secretary-General also encouraged Kuwait to fully benefit from UN Tourism Online Academy resources.
- During the meeting with the General Manager of the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB), the discussions highlighted Jordan's position as a safe, stable, and diverse destination within the global tourism landscape. Special focus on Innovation, digital transformation, statistics, capacity building and women empowerment and promotion of Bedouin sites.
- During her meeting with Syria Deputy Minister of Tourism, the Secretary-General confirmed UN Tourism commitment to support Syria's tourism recovery, focusing on capacity building, quality services, and heritage preservation (in collaboration with UNESCO). Areas of collaboration include human capacity building (on-site training), handicrafts, tourism infrastructure reconstruction, and modernizing education/training systems. A post-Ramadan visit to Syria is foreseen, emphasizing on community-based and sustainable recovery. The visit would mark a significant step in supporting Syria's reconstruction and Tourism recovery.
- It is worth to mention that the Middle East maintained one of the most visible and dynamic footprints at Fitur 2026, reflecting its 2025 growth trend. For the first time, major hubs like Abu Dhabi and Dubai held expanded, prominent positions at FITUR, signalling a shift toward more aggressive European market outreach. Egypt captured significant attention with a large-scale replica of the newly inaugurated Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), serving as a centrepiece for the region's cultural tourism promotion.

UN Tourism major initiatives, services, projects, and activities:

63. The International Code for the Protection of Tourists (ICPT) is a comprehensive set of principles and recommendations on the protection of tourists in emergency situations, not limited to pandemics, and the rights of tourists as consumers, aimed at restoring consumer confidence in travel and providing sufficient guarantees to international tourists in the post COVID-19 environment. The United Arab Emirates and Syria are the only countries from the Region having fully adhered to the ICPT.

64. The UN Tourism Working Group on Regional and Thematic Offices (chaired by Egypt): The Terms of Reference establishing the mandate, composition and working methods of the Working Group were approved by the 119th session of the Executive Council through [decision 7\(CXIX\)](#) and subsequently further noted by the 25th session of the General Assembly through [Resolution 763\(XXV\)](#). The Working Group convened five meetings. A summary and overview of the discussions was included in the Report on Regional and Thematic Offices submitted to the 124th session of the Executive Council (CE/124/5).

Bilateral relationships and Regional and sub-regional cooperation:

65. The Regional Department for the Middle East is currently exploring collaboration with our partners from the region, mainly:

- King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language to enhance the presence of the Arabic language in UN Tourism.
- MoU King Saud University (Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management) on education and training;

66. Product development: Ongoing discussion regarding “Qatar Farm Tourism Development Program” aiming to develop world-class agri-tourism experiences by leveraging UN Tourism expertise and experience and Qatar tourism standards

67. UN Tourism has signed MoUs with some Regional Organizations in the Middle East, mainly:

- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); and
- The Arab Tourism Organization (ATO)
- The League of Arab States (LAS)

68. UN Tourism Proposal to the League of Arab States and the Arab Tourism Organization to cooperate in the creation of the Tourism Innovation Observatory for Arab Member States, aiming at promoting:

- Education and human capital development through the creation of massive online open courses designed for Digital and Tech Entrepreneurship for the MENA region.
- Innovation through the implementation of the Arabian Tourism Innovation Report to help understand the region's strengths and weaknesses in terms of innovation, its key players, and emerging technologies.

Annex I. List of UN Tourism events in the Middle East Region

Date	Event	Venue
February 2025		
11-14	The 51st UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Middle East and the Conference "Sports Tourism and the Tourism Industry After FIFA World Cup"	Doha, Qatar
March 2025		
10	One -to-One Informative Session for the UAE on the Application for the Best Tourism Villages 2025 (BTV)	Online
April		
7-9	Annual Investment Congress: (AIM) UN Tourism's: Ministerial Roundtable on "Investment in Tourism: Shaping Tourism Investment Opportunities through Policy Innovation"	Abu Dhabi, UAE
June 2025		
24	Third Meeting of the Working Group on UN Tourism Regional and Thematic Offices	Online
September 2025		
9-10	First Regional Wellness Tourism Workshop for the Middle East	ROME , Riyadh , Saudi Arabia 32 participants from 12 Middle East countries
16-17	Arabitrips Informative session by Jordan Tourism Board	Online
23	Meeting of the Working Group on Regional and Thematic Offices ' 4 th & 5 th edition	Online
October 2025		
1-2	Headquarters meeting with Oman LNG Development Foundation	Headquarters, Madrid
30	Informative meeting with Member States on Riyadh Declaration	Online
November 2025		

7-11	26th session of the General Assembly	Riyadh, KSA
January 2026		
15	Kick-Off Meeting for the <i>“Tourism for Rural Development in the Middle East: Rural Insights and Future Pathways”</i> Report.	Online
21-23	A series of meetings with Ministers and Highest officials from UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Syria in margins of Fitur 2026	IFEMA, Madrid
February 2026		
10-12	52 nd RCME meeting and accompanying Conference on <i>“Promoting Tourism through Artificial Intelligence”</i>	Kuwait, State of Kuwait
September 2026		
TBC	First Regional Forum on Gastronomy Tourism for the Middle East in 2026,	Sultanate of Oman
October 2026		
25-26	International Tourism Investment Forum	Manama, Bahrain
December 2026	Arab Tourism Ministers Meeting and Executive board Meeting	(TBC) League of Arab States, Cairo

Annex II. List of new Affiliate Members from the Middle East

Name of Affiliate Member	Member State
1. Exhibition World Bahrain	(Bahrain)
2. Gulf Hotels Group	
3. The Arab Regional Center for World Heritage	
4. National Hotels Company B.S.c	
5. Vatel School in Bahrain	
6. Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF)	
7. Association of Tourism and Travel Agents in Iraq	(Iraq)
8. Jordan Hotels Association	(Jordan)
9. Jordan Restaurant Association	
10. Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority	
11. Jordan Tourism Board	
12. Royal Jordanian	
13. OMAN Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group)	(Oman)
14. Sultan Qaboos University	
15. The National Museum	
16. Aamal Travel & Tourism	(Qatar)
17. Qatar Museums	
18. Katara Hospitality	
19. Qatari Hotels Association	
20. Retaj Hotels & Hospitality	
21. IFP Qatar	
22. NeXTfairs	
23. Al Mashreq Hospitality	(Saudi Arabia)
24. Almosafer Company for Travel and Tourism	

25. AIUla Guide Tours	
26. Aseer Development Authority	
27. Amsa Hospitality Company	
28. Batterjee Medical college (BMC)	
29. Bunyan for Training Company	
30. Diriyah Company	
31. Taiba Investments	
32. Flynas Company	
33. Higher Institute for Tourism and Hospitality	
34. INAAR Hospitality& Tourism Consultancy	
35. Jeddah Central Development Company	
36. NEOM	
37. Red Sea Global	
38. Royal Commission for AIUla	
39. Saudi Tourism Authority	
40. Soudah Development Company	
41. Colliers MENA	(Emirates)
42. Fujairah Adventures Centre	
43. Fujairah Tourism and Antiquities Department	
44. ICL TOURS AND TRAVELS LLC	
45. New Perspective Media FZ LLC	
46. RAS AL KHAIMAH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY	
47. ROCKET DMC INTERNATIONAL - FZCO	
48. Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq)	
49. Emirates Council for Balanced Development	

Annex III: Detailed list of Technical Assistance Projects in the Middle East

STATUS: COMPLETED

Country/ Region	Project	Year and Implementation Timeframe	Tourism Benefit	Current Status and Next Steps
Qatar	Organizing Qatar Tourism Awards first and second 2023 and 2024	2023-2024 10-month for each edition	Boost the tourism sector by recognizing excellence, motivating stakeholders, and raising service standards across the industry. The initiative enhances Qatar's global image as a quality destination, fosters collaboration among tourism partners, and builds visitor confidence by showcasing best practices, innovation, and sustainability in tourism services.	
Saudi Arabia	Evaluation of Tourism Statistics System	2022-2023	Evaluation of the full process of tourism data analysis while strengthening the capacity to implement a model for data processing and gaining knowledge on statistical methodology and research.	

STATUS: ONGOING

Country/ Region	Project	Year and Implementation Timeframe	Tourism Benefit	Current Status and Next Steps
Qatar	Organizing Qatar Tourism Awards – Edition Three	2025-2027 10-month for each edition	Boost the tourism sector by recognizing excellence, motivating stakeholders, and raising service standards across the industry. The initiative enhances Qatar's global image as a quality destination, fosters collaboration among tourism partners, and builds visitor confidence by showcasing best practices, innovation, and sustainability in tourism services.	The Scope of work was modified to focus on Supervisory/Advisory Role for UN Tourism The agreement is currently with QT to be checked internally with MOFA

Oman	The Update of the Hotel Classification Scheme	2025-2028 3-year project	Enhance the quality, consistency, and competitiveness of the country's hospitality sector and improve service standards, increase visitor satisfaction, and strengthen the country's overall tourism image and appeal.	The project started during December. And the first mission was conducted end of Feb. The revised classification is under preparation with ongoing discussions with the classification team within the Ministry
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IN THE PIPELINE

Country/ Region	Project	Year and Implementation Timeframe	Tourism Benefit	Current Status and Next Steps
Bahrain	Tourism Statistics Assessment Mission	2025 tbc 1.5-month project	Continuation of assistance to country by reviewing the methodological and procedural standards applied in the compilation of their Tourism Satellite Account (TSA).	Follow up on the proposal submitted in August 2025.
Egypt	Ensuring a sustainable tourism future for Egypt: heat resilience and institutional resilience through a capacity-building platform (Discussion stage)	2026-27 12-month project	Novel area of work that could be implemented together with the Affiliate Member, ICF. Project focused on supporting countries impacted by heat waves and related climate issues, such as water scarcity. Focus on making the tourism sector resilient by creating actionable frameworks to manage the impact of climate on tourism infrastructure. A proposal is being studied to link this novel area of work with Member State interests – a capacity-building platform to strengthen institutional resilience.	Preparations are still at an initial phase, so, a meeting with the delegation to learn more about their priorities is considered necessary. Based on that, UN Tourism could prepare an applicable Concept Note.

Jordan	HR Strategy	2026	The development of highly skilled and well-trained human resources in the public and private sectors to develop, manage, and serve the tourism sector in a sustainable and competitive manner, and in accordance with international standards.	Follow up with Jordan about the proposal and the way forward
Kuwait	Quality standards for hotels and restaurants		improve visitor satisfaction and enhance the destination's reputation by ensuring consistent, high-quality service. Additionally, increase competitiveness in the global market, support sustainable tourism growth, and build industry capacity through training. This ultimately leads to a more professional and attractive tourism sector.	The country keeps asking to provide the UN Tourism criteria related to hotels, restaurants and cafes We informed them through RDME that there is no single set of criteria specifically for restaurants and cafés, just as with the hotel classification system, as these frameworks must be adapted to each country's unique context and government vision. Would be good to encourage them to start evaluation mission regarding the quality standards there.
Lebanon	Development of a Destination Management Organization System	2025-2026 4-month project	Create a centralized and coordinated approach to managing tourism sector. It enhances strategic planning, improves visitor satisfaction, supports sustainable tourism practices, and strengthens local economic development by aligning public and private sector efforts.	Nothing pending from IDC side The Agreement with Lebanon is currently under internal verification - Coordinating by RDME
Libya	Institutional Strengthening, Human-Capital Development, Digital Transformation, and Destination Promotion	Tbd	Revitalise and Diversify Libya's tourism sector. The areas identified - institutional strengthening, human-capital development, digital transformation, and destination promotion.	Follow up with the country
Oman	Establishment of Culinary Centre	Tbd	Promote local cuisine and food culture,	Follow up with the country

			attracting food enthusiasts and enhancing the overall visitor experience. It supports local producers and chefs, creates new tourism products, and encourages longer stays. This helps diversify the tourism offer and strengthens the destination's identity and appeal.	
Qatar	Farm Tourism	Tbd		Follow up with the country
Saudi Arabia Asser	The Preparation of the Tourism Human Resources Development Strategy	2025 2.5-month project	The development of highly skilled and well-trained human resources in the public and private sectors to develop, manage, and serve the tourism sector in a sustainable and competitive manner and in accordance with international standards.	Follow up with the country about the proposal shared, in collaboration with ROME and RDME
Saudi Arabia Aseer	Vision and Action Plan to Build Aseer Region into a World-Renowned Tourist Destination		Based on our successful on-going project with Fujian China, we are exploring the opportunity for a similar tailor made project to develop a Tourism Vision and Action Plan capable of acting as a blueprint for the Aseer Development Authority and other tourism stakeholders in Aseer, thus allowing them to take priority actions on tourism planning, marketing, product development, and human resources development.	
Saudi Arabia Soudah	Tourism Marketing: How to Attract the Chinese Tourism Market		Tailor-made in-person capacity building training in the Regional Office for the Middle East for public and private marketing actors of Soudah.	
Syria	Recovery Plans	Tbd		Draft proposal is currently under discussion within IDC

UAE	Development of Tourism Statistics System and TSA projects- Phase III	Tbc	Provide accurate and comprehensive data on tourism's economic impact. This enables better planning, policymaking, and investment decisions, helping to optimize resource allocation, monitor growth, and enhance competitiveness in the tourism sector.	A meeting was held with the Director of Tourism during FITUR, followed by a formal request sent to the Ministry asking them to share all areas of interest discussed, so that we can coordinate the next steps accordingly.
GCC Secretariat	GCC Working Group on Tourism Data Governance and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Innovation	2025 TBC	The GCC Working Group on Tourism Data Governance and AI Innovation is a pioneering initiative to establish a robust framework for data-driven tourism governance in the GCC region. This initiative will focus on developing standardized methodologies for data collection, AI policy frameworks for tourism data usage (from public and private sector), and fostering collaborative research through joint publications and knowledge-sharing mechanisms.	A proposal has been shared with GCC and received positive feedback. ROME and IDC are coordinating with relevant departments for the next steps.
Regional initiative for the Middle East	Co Creation Lab on Resilient Tourism Future: Strengthening Safety and Crisis Response in the Middle East	2026 (TBC) Quarters II-III	Provide a presential platform for representatives from Ministries of Tourism, National Tourism Organisations, and related entities, of the Middle East to discuss best practices, exchange ideas, and develop concrete policy guidance for crisis management in the tourism sector.	Follow up with ROME about the timing for this technical workshop in 2026, and approximate funds that could be assigned to this project. ROME has confirmed that it has been inserted as part of its PoW 2026.