News Release

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UN Tourism

UN Tourism strengthens tourism measurement in global economic system

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 17 March 2026 – Tourism moves billions of people every year, supports hundreds of millions of jobs and drives trade across the global economy. Yet the data used to measure its true impact has often struggled to keep pace with the rapid growth and transformation of the sector.

Closing this gap requires globally agreed standards. At the 57th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission – the world's highest authority on official statistics – UN Tourism advanced efforts to strengthen how tourism is measured within the global economic system, helping governments and businesses rely on clearer, internationally comparable data.

Secretary-General of UN Tourism, Shaikha Al Nuwais said: "Tourism is one of the world's most dynamic economic sectors, and it deserves data systems that reflect its true scale and impact. Strengthening global tourism statistics and linking them with business sustainability reporting helps ensure that decisions across the sector are grounded in reliable, comparable evidence."

Strengthening Tourism in Global Trade Statistics

One important outcome was the endorsement of the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2026, to which UN Tourism contributed. The updated framework strengthens how tourism is measured as a globally traded service, enabling countries to better capture tourism's role within global trade flows and economic policy.

The Commission also acknowledged the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST), recognized by the United Nations General Assembly as the first statistical model to measure tourism's economic, social and environmental impacts together, beyond traditional GDP indicators.

Linking Business Sustainability Data with Official Statistics

On 4 March, UN Tourism convened the high-level side event "Bridging Macro and Micro Data in Sustainability: The Case of Tourism and the ESG Framework for Tourism Businesses."

The discussion explored how sustainability reporting by tourism businesses can align with internationally agreed statistical frameworks. By linking company-level ESG data with national

statistics, the approach can improve consistency across the tourism economy, support small and medium-sized enterprises and reduce fragmented reporting requirements.

The event was hosted at the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in collaboration with the UN Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics, with support from Statistics Netherlands and sponsorship by easyJet holidays and Booking.com.

Related links:

Bridging macro and micro data in sustainability: The case of tourism and the ESG Framework for Tourism Businesses
ESG Framework for Tourism Businesses