

## **Committee on Tourism and Sustainability**

**Twenty-first Meeting**

**CTS/21/SumConcl.  
Madrid, 8 November 2025**

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### **Summary and Conclusions**

#### **Introduction**

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1. The Committee on Tourism and Sustainability (CTS) convened its twenty-first meeting in Riyadh on 8 November 2025, on the occasion of the 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization.
2. Representatives from all nine Member States serving for the period of 2023-2027 participated in the twenty-first meeting of the CTS: Costa Rica (Chair), Croatia (Vice-Chair), Egypt, Fiji, Kenya, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

#### **I. Welcome remarks by Chair of the CTS, H.E. Mr. William Rodríguez López, Minister of Tourism, Costa Rican Institute of Tourism**

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3. The meeting was presided by the Chair of the CTS, H.E. Mr. William Rodríguez López, Minister of Tourism, Costa Rican Institute of Tourism, who opened the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the CTS and welcomed participants.
4. He reminded that the role of the members of the CTS is to ensure that UN Tourism's efforts to advance the global tourism agenda in a more sustainable and resilient manner truly address the needs of its members, while also guiding the organization in fulfilling this critical mandate.
5. The Chair recognized the ongoing efforts led by the department of Sustainable Tourism and Resilience of UN Tourism in addressing today's sustainability challenges, from climate change and biodiversity to the blue economy, the elimination of plastics, sustainable consumption and production, the monitoring of sustainability through the INSTO Network, and preparedness for health and tourism emergencies.
6. He recalled Costa Rica's leadership in developing a dynamic yet sustainable tourism sector, demonstrating its success through continuous monitoring, active participation in national initiatives, prioritizing community well-being and rigorous benchmarking, ensuring that all initiatives are guided by Costa Rica's sustainability vision, fostering approaches that are both regenerative and inclusive.
7. He further highlighted Costa Rica's active engagement in international efforts as a strong advocate for climate action in tourism, committing to reduce plastic pollution and advancing the measurement of sustainable tourism, while emphasizing that achieving a truly sustainable future for the sector requires a unified, strategic approach that integrates the full spectrum of UN initiatives.

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**II. Welcome remarks by Executive Director of UN Tourism, Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic**

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8. The Executive Director began with setting the scene on the global tourism performance, declaring that after a slow but steady recovery process in the aftermath of the pandemic and navigating multi-crisis, the tourism sector in 2024 witnessed the full and complete recovery of the tourism sector and 2025 will continue to see positive growth.

9. ED reminded that having experienced the vulnerabilities of the tourism sector and having witnessed its capacity for resilience and recovery, now, more than before, sustainability has to be at the core of all tourism processes – because tourism as services trade to create wealth and economic impact “consumes” nature – both biodiversity attractiveness and natural resources. Sustainability is one of the key priority areas of the work of UN tourism for fostering sustainability, inclusiveness, circularity, climate action and biodiversity.

10. ED continued with reporting to the committee key achievements of the Organization, as well as major new steps in the governance of sustainability such as the Executive Council working group on Climate Action as well as One Planet Sustainable Tourism initiative now with the Institutional Relations, Partnerships and Advocacy Department, highlighting the Global Partnership for Enhanced Climate Action in Tourism as part of the legacy of COP29, the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative, the Organization’s contribution on Net Positive Tourism through joint initiative with the World Travel and Tourism Council and the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, participation in side events of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at COP-16 in Colombia, in addition to other collaborations with the World Health Organization and the G20 to strengthen sustainable and resilience of tourism.

11. She emphasized closer collaboration, partnerships for climate action and biodiversity as well as knowledge sharing on measuring sustainable tourism indicators through the working group on climate change and Circularity and Committee on Statistics.

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**III. Adoption of the agenda**

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12. The CTS members adopted the agenda of the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting as proposed (see Annex).

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**IV. Presentation by the Secretariat on the current thematic priorities**

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13. The Director of the Sustainable Tourism and Resilience Department of UN Tourism, Dr. Dirk Glaesser, presented the key workstreams carried out since the last reporting to the CTS and delivered a comprehensive overview of the Organization’s current thematic priorities, highlighting how UN Tourism is operationalizing the sustainability mandate across the 2024-2025 biennium. He recalled that the Committee is responsible for ensuring that UN Tourism’s work on sustainability and resilience reflects the needs and expectations of Member States and therefore provided a structured presentation of the principal thematic areas.

**14. UN General Assembly Engagement and Reporting.**

The Director emphasized the central importance of engagement with the United Nations General Assembly for elevating tourism within the wider UN system. He recalled the two major Secretary-

General reports, the Global Report on Sustainable Tourism and the Regional Report for the Americas and encouraged Member States to provide inputs through the upcoming Note Verbale to support evidence-based negotiations in New York. He noted that securing the inclusion of *resilience* in the UNGA resolution constituted a significant achievement that will inform related UN processes.

#### **15. Biodiversity, Nature-Positive Tourism and CBD Processes**

Dr. Glaesser presented the finalized publication *Integration of Biodiversity in National Tourism Policies* and outlined key findings from the analysis of the *6th National Reports* submitted under the Convention on Biological Diversity, which showed strong recognition of tourism's contribution to conservation. He also informed Members of forthcoming guidance linked to the new Global Biodiversity Framework and highlighted joint work with WTTC and the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance under the Nature-Positive Tourism initiative, including new guidelines and destination case studies.

#### **16. Climate Action and Resilience – Glasgow Declaration and COP Processes**

The Director provided an update on support to Members and signatories of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, including an analysis of existing climate-action planning tools and methodologies for destinations. He drew attention to the Global Partnership for Enhanced Climate Action in Tourism, developed as a legacy of COP29 and underscored the growing synergies between climate action, circularity and plastics reduction.

#### **17. G20 Tourism Working Group – Action Plan on Resilience**

He recalled the Organization's role in preparing the evidence-based report *An Action Plan for Enhanced Resilience for Inclusive, Sustainable Tourism Development* for the South Africa G20 Presidency. He explained that the Action Plan is grounded in comparative analysis of G20 Members' national policies, thereby supporting the development of harmonized language on resilience that can subsequently inform broader UN and intergovernmental processes.

#### **18. Emergency Preparedness in Health and Tourism – WHO / UN Tourism Publication**

The Director presented the forthcoming WHO/UN Tourism publication on emergency preparedness in health and tourism, noting that it incorporates lessons learned from Ebola, Zika and COVID-19. He recalled UN Tourism's participation in WHO emergency committees and highlighted the Organization's contribution to ensuring neutral naming conventions (e.g., COVID-19) to avoid geographical stigmatization of destinations.

#### **19. Evidence-Based Governance and the Role of Observatories (INSTO, IDB, World Bank)**

Dr. Glaesser stressed the importance of evidence-based destination governance and presented the publication developed with the Inter-American Development Bank on the role of observatories in advancing sustainable transformation at sub-national level. He also referred to complementary collaborations with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank on nature-based tourism and observatory systems. He updated Members on the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO), which currently consists of 44 active observatories, and encouraged broader regional participation, noting that observatories must be nationally anchored and locally owned.

#### **20. Circularity and Plastics – Global Tourism Plastics Initiative**

Finally, the Director updated the Committee on the 2024 Progress Report of the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative, emphasizing plastics reduction as both a circularity and climate-action measure and highlighting the initiative's role as a practical entry point for the private sector and destinations.

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**V. Discussions on the presentation of current thematic priorities**

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21. Saudi Arabia, present as Observer at the Meeting, confirmed that sustainability is at the core of the Kingdom's tourism development strategy and highlighted its Sustainable Tourism Global Center and its commitment to advance the global efforts towards a more sustainable and inclusive tourism sector.
22. Fiji inquired guidance to mainstream biodiversity and to synergize with their Ministries of Environment.
23. Zimbabwe highlighted the role of sustainable tourism for an inclusive and resilient economic growth and lead contributor of its GDP as well as employment, and mentioned the newly launched tourism policy, and their interest monitoring through the establishments of observatories.
24. Croatia shared their experience in monitoring for measuring impact on sustainability and as decision maker based on collected evidence with the collaboration of the academia, the Croatian Sustainable Tourism Observatory, a Member of the INSTO network, and UN Tourism.

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**VI. Future activities of the Committee**

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25. The Director presented the future activities of the Committee, recalling that the upcoming period will require close coordination with Members in view of the strict reporting and negotiation timelines mandated by the United Nations. He emphasized that the Committee's contribution remains essential to ensure that the tourism sector continues to be accurately reflected in intergovernmental processes.
26. He also informed the Committee that work will begin in January on the preparation of the next Secretary-General's report to the United Nations General Assembly, in accordance with A/RES/79/220 on the Promotion of sustainable and resilient tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environmental protection. He explained that the Secretariat must deliver the full draft report to the United Nations by end of February, and therefore early engagement of Member States is critical.
27. In this regard, he recalled that the Secretariat will transmit a Note Verbale in February, requesting Members to provide inputs on policy developments and national updates in the areas of sustainability and resilience that have occurred over the last two years. The Director underlined that even where Members cannot complete the full questionnaire, the simple transmission of recent policy documents is already extremely valuable for the reporting process.
28. The Director stressed that cooperation with Member States is fundamental for strengthening the tourism sector's visibility and credibility in UN negotiations. He explained that the Committee's support in supplying evidence, national examples, and policy updates significantly enhances the Organization's ability to defend and advance tourism-related language during the intergovernmental negotiation phase in New York.
29. He further noted that the Secretariat will continue its contribution to the negotiation of the updated UNGA resolution on sustainable and resilient tourism, including the related regional report for the Americas, and recalled the important role of the Chair and Vice-Chair in supporting these discussions at the UN level.
30. Finally, the Director encouraged Members to consider how the Committee may continue to support the dissemination and practical uptake of the numerous technical products developed, such as

those on biodiversity, climate action planning, observatories, and emergency preparedness, and suggested that the next CTS meeting could explore additional mechanisms to improve the reach and impact of this work beyond seminars and formal sessions.

## **VII. Place and date of the next in-person meeting of the Committee on Tourism and Sustainability**

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31. Under this agenda item, the Director informed the Committee that the next in-person meeting of the CTS will take place during FITUR 2026 in Madrid, Spain. He proposed holding the meeting at UN Tourism Headquarters in the morning of the second day of the fair, following the model of the current session. The suggested date and time for the 22nd Meeting of the CTS is 22 January 2026, from 08:00 to 10:00, with hybrid participation to facilitate both in-person and online attendance.

32. The Committee agreed with the proposal, and the Chair confirmed that there was consensus among Members on the place and timing of the next meeting.

33. The Director further informed the Committee that, upon confirmation by Zimbabwe of its continued interest, the 23rd Meeting of the CTS is expected to be hosted in Zimbabwe in 2026, with the precise dates and programme to be agreed between the UN Tourism Secretariat and the authorities of Zimbabwe.

## **VIII. Other issues**

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34. Under this agenda item, the Chair opened the floor for any other issues that Members or participants wished to raise. While no formal interventions were recorded, Members expressed interest in further exploring ways to enhance the dissemination and practical use of the Organization's growing body of technical work on sustainable tourism. It was suggested that the next meeting of the Committee could consider additional mechanisms to increase outreach beyond seminars and formal sessions, including more accessible formats for Member States and stakeholders.

## **IX. Closing remarks**

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35. The Chair of the CTS thanked the CTS Members for their contribution and attendance to the meeting and the UN Tourism Secretariat for support and assistance and looks forward with the incoming Secretary-General that sustainability continues to be a priority area of the organization.

36. The Chair also encouraged all members to take action, since all of us belong to this committee to make the change. Motivated to embrace, as soon as possible, all the efforts to make sustainable tourism the kind of tourism that most countries, no matter the type of product each country has, that world will experience in the future. Emphasized that sustainable tourism is the balance interaction between the use of the country's natural and cultural resources, the improvement of the quality of life among the local communities, and the economic success of the industry, it is the job of the committee to promote the change.

## ANNEX

### Committee on Tourism and Sustainability

Twenty-first meeting

CTS/21/fin.ag  
Riyadh, 8 November 2025

#### Agenda

1. **Welcome remarks**

- By H.E. Mr. William Rodríguez López, Minister of Tourism, Costa Rican Institute of Tourism, and Chair of the Committee on Tourism and Sustainability (CTS)
- By Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic, Executive Director, UN Tourism

2. **Adoption of the Agenda**

3. **Presentation and discussion of the current thematic priorities**

- Reports and resolutions on sustainable tourism adopted by the UN General Assembly
- Promoting biodiversity action in tourism
- Advancing nature-positive tourism
- G20 Tourism Working Group: *Action Plan for Enhanced Resilience for Inclusive, Sustainable Tourism Development*
- WHO/UN Tourism joint publication on *Emergency Preparedness in Health and Tourism*
- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) publication: *The Role of Observatories in Leading the Sustainable Transformation of Destinations*
- Publication: *Supporting Climate Action Planning in Tourism Destinations: A Review of Literature and Tools for Local Authorities*
- *2024 Annual Progress Report of the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative*
- International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO)

4. **Future activities of the Committee**

- Negotiation of the UNGA resolution text on A/80/267, Sustainable and resilient tourism and sustainable development in Central America and the Dominican Republic

- Preparation for the report on the Promotion of sustainable and resilient tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environmental protection□ according to A/RES/79/220
5. **Place and date of the next in-person meeting of the Committee on Tourism and Sustainability**
  6. **Other issues**
  7. **Closing remarks**

