



7th Session of the Technical Committee on Tourism Online Education

Format: Online

MINUTES OF MEETING

10th December 2025 14:00-15:30

Index

1. Attendees
2. Approved Agenda
3. Meeting Minutes of Discussion
4. Takeaways and next steps

1. Attendees

Member States

- Ms. Maryam Awadh, Director of Curriculum Quality and Impact Tourism Capability Deputyship, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Ms. Ana Paula Pais, Director of Training Turismo de Portugal, Portugal
- Ms. Yvona Havel, Ministry of Tourism of Czechia
- Ms. Benilde Paulo, Ministry of Tourism of Angola
- Mr. Mohammed Khattouch, Director ISTAHT, Kingdom of Morocco
- Ms. Wonhee Lee, Korea Cultura Tourism Institute, South Korea
- Mr. Leonardo Latorre, Head of Coordination and Strategic Planning, Undersecretariat of Tourism of Chile
- Dr. Valy Teymouri, Director-General for Tourism Studies, Education and Planning at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Ms. Ana Paula Moreno, International Relations and Cooperation, Ministry of Tourism of Uruguay
- Ms. Sally Chiu, Hong Kong

Private Sector

- Ms. Megan EplerWood PhD., Cornell University

- Mr. Carlos Diaz de la Lastra, CEO, Les Roches
- Mr. Dasa Farcnik, University of Ljubljana
- Ms. Rita Marques, Porto Business School
- Ms. Ulrika Björklund, Dean Hotel Institute Montreux, Swiss Education Group
- Mr. Rui Zhou, President Bella Vista Higher Education
- Mr. David Peguero, CETT
- Mr. Emmanuel Murasiranwa, Arden University
- Mr. Juan Jose Guemes, IE University

UN Tourism

- Mr. Antonio López de Ávila, Director Innovation, Education, and Investments Department
- Ms. Tijana Brkic, Technical assistant, UN Tourism Academy
- Ms. Mireia Canut, Technical assistant, UN Tourism Academy
- Mr. Alejandro Gutiérrez, Project Manager
- Ms. Paula de Blas, Senior Education Specialist

2 . Approved Agenda

- 14:00–14:10 Welcome Remarks by UN Tourism
- 14:10–14:30 Election and Presentation of the new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee
- 14:30–14:45 2025 results by Antonio López de Ávila, Director Innovation, Education, and Investments UN Tourism
- 14:45–15:00 Open discussion with participation of the rest of the Members of the Committee
- 15:00–15:20 Decision on UN Tourism Online Academy Scholarships package distribution for 2025/26 period
- 15:20–15:30 Outcomes of the session by the Chair of the Committee

3. Minutes:

Introduction

- The meeting was formally opened by Mr. Antonio López de Avila, Director of Innovation, Education and Investment at UN Tourism, who welcomed all distinguished delegates, representatives of Member States, private-sector organizations, academic partners, and other invited guests.
- Mr. López de Avila highlighted the importance of the session, which marked the beginning of a new mandate cycle for the Online Education Committee (2025–2029).

-Mr. López de Avila thanked all attendees for their presence, commitment, and continuous collaboration, emphasizing that their participation is essential for advancing global tourism education and capacity-building.

Technical and Procedural Announcements

Mr. López de Avila reminded the committee of several operational instructions:

- The technical team had previously circulated guidelines on how to vote in both the Chair and Vice-Chair elections.
- Attendees could activate simultaneous interpretation and real-time translation, and all microphones should remain muted except when taking the floor.
- As the meeting was being held outside the Executive Council framework and therefore outside the previous mandate period, Mr. López de Avila confirmed he would moderate until the new Chair and Vice-Chair were elected.
- Once elected, the newly appointed leadership would assume their roles following the agenda.

Acknowledgment of Outgoing Members (2021–2025 Mandate)

Mr. López formally expressed appreciation for the former Committee Members whose mandate had ended:

- Greece
- Central African Republic
- Brazil

He noted that their contributions had been instrumental in developing key projects and supporting the expansion of tourism education worldwide.

Special recognition was extended to the outgoing Co-Chairs:

- Portugal
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Their leadership, dedication, and continuous engagement were praised as essential to sustaining the committee's momentum.

Welcome to New Member States (2025–2029 Mandate)

Mr. López de Avila welcomed the three new Member States joining the Committee:

- Uruguay
- Angola
- Czechia

He underscored that their unique perspectives, national contexts, and technical experience would significantly enrich the committee's work during the new cycle.

Overview of the Meeting Agenda

The Chair ad interim introduced the agenda, noting that the session had a particularly significant and strategic purpose, including:

- A review of the progress achieved under ongoing educational and capacity-building initiatives.
- The election of the new Chair and Vice-Chair for the 2025–2029 mandate.
- Strategic decisions for shaping the committee's direction and priorities for the next four years.

He reiterated the central role of the committee in advancing tourism education, skills development, and lifelong learning globally.

Election of the Chair (2025–2029)

Mr. López de Avila explained that two Member States had submitted candidacies for the position of Chair:

- Iran
- Portugal

Each candidate was invited to deliver a statement summarizing their vision and intentions should they be elected.

Statement by Iran – Mr. Vali Teymouri

Mr. Vali Teymouri, Advisor to the Minister and Director General of Tourism Studies, Education and Planning at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran, delivered a comprehensive and thoughtful statement.

Key points from his remarks:

- Challenges Facing Global Tourism
The world is experiencing persistent instability: geopolitical tensions, economic volatility, climate risks, and social disruptions.
- Tourism, being highly sensitive to these conditions, faces:
 - Declines in international mobility
 - Increased operational costs
 - Reduced confidence across the sector

Mr. Teymouri emphasized that education must accelerate during crises, rather than slow down. Periods of reduced travel offer valuable time to:

- Reflect
- Reskill
- Build resilience
- Prepare for recovery cycles

- Online Education as a Strategic Tool

He viewed the UN Tourism Online Academy as:

A mechanism not only for capacity-building, but primarily a tool for redistributing educational opportunity, a gateway to educational equity.

He gave examples of learners who benefit:

- Entrepreneurs in rural communities
- Women managing small hospitality businesses
- Students in low-income environments

He proposed Priorities for the Committee, deepening alignment with sustainability: Making sustainability a permanent mindset, not a separate topic.

Extending educational access to fragile regions:

- Supporting professionals affected by instability, economic constraints, or fragile institutions.

Strengthening cooperation:

- Better links between national tourism authorities, universities, vocational institutions, and the Online Academy.

Iran's National Strengths in Tourism Education

He detailed Iran's extensive tourism education ecosystem, including:

- Universities offering bachelor's, master's, and PhD degrees in tourism and hospitality
- A strong network of vocational and technical schools
- A dynamic private-sector training environment
- Investments in digital learning and e-learning platforms
- A forthcoming National Strategy for Tourism Human Capital Development

He expressed Iran's readiness to offer its expertise and collaborate actively with all Member States.

Statement by Portugal – Ms. Ana Paula Pais

Ms. Ana Paula Pais, Head of Training at Turismo de Portugal and Co-Chair of the previous mandate, delivered a structured presentation supported by slides.

Key themes of her intervention:

- Portugal's Tourism Education Ecosystem, highly recognized internationally for excellence, innovation, and inclusivity
- A nationwide network of tourism and hospitality schools certified by UN Tourism

- Programs awarded for sustainability, innovation, and social responsibility

-Key Achievements and leadership in talent development initiatives:

- Creation of a national coordination commission aligning education with industry needs
- Establishment of a Digital Tourism Academy with over 65,000 professionals involved and 280,000 people trained online since 2021
- Implementation of migrant integration programs acknowledged as global best practices
- Youth-focused educational projects developed with the Ministry of Education
- Deployment of co-branded hospitality schools in Portuguese-speaking countries

Vision for the Committee (2025–2029)

-Ms. Pais emphasized:

- Turning online education into a driver of inclusion, supporting innovation-based curricula aligned with digital, green and social transitions
- Strengthening collaboration between Member States and the private sector
- Promoting lifelong learning as essential in a rapidly changing world and creating inclusive opportunities for youth worldwide
- Designing a comprehensive roadmap for the future of work in tourism

-She expressed humility and commitment, noting that the committee's strength lies in collective work and shared purpose.

Voting Procedure

-The technical team, led by Ms. Tijana, initiated the voting process through Zoom: Only official committee members were allowed to vote.

Delegates were called one by one by region (Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, private sector).

Contingencies were applied for delegates who could not access the poll (e.g., mobile users could vote via private chat).

The process was carried out transparently, with double verification of votes by the technical team.

Election Results – Chair

After verification, the technical team announced:

ELECTED CHAIR (2025–2029)

Ms. Ana Paula Pais (Portugal)

A warm round of congratulations was expressed across the Committee.

Ms. Pais thanked Members for their trust and promised inclusive leadership, strong collaboration with all Member States, focus on creating opportunities for youth and professionals and close cooperation with the UN Tourism Education Team.

Election of the Vice-Chair (2025–2029)

Two Member States presented candidacies:

- Uruguay
- Iran

Statement by Uruguay – Ms. Ana Paula Moreno

-Ms. Moreno delivered her statement in Spanish.

She emphasized:

- Uruguay's commitment to sustainable tourism development
- Strengthening the country's international cooperation
- The intention to support all Member States through collaboration
- Promoting digital skills, sustainability, and accessible tourism education
- The value Uruguay places on inclusive development, community-based tourism, and capacity building

She added that her National Director, Mr. Cristian Pos, would lead operational responsibilities if elected.

Additional Statement by Iran – Mr. Vali Teymouri

Mr. Teymouri extended his earlier remarks with a deeper overview of Iran's Multilateral and bilateral cooperation in tourism education:

- Mature academic ecosystem across universities and vocational schools
- Active national digital learning platforms
- Long-term national strategy for tourism human capital

He reiterated his country's readiness to contribute extensively to the Committee.

Voting Procedure for Vice-Chair

The technical team launched a second poll, following the same region-by-region calling system.

One delegate (Hong Kong) submitted her vote via private chat due to technical limitations.

Election Results – Vice-Chair

ELECTED VICE-CHAIR (2025–2029)

Ms. Ana Paula Moreno (Uruguay)

Both candidates received warm congratulations. Uruguay thanked members for their trust and reiterated their strong commitment to contributing constructively to the committee's work.

Presentation of the “Education 2025” Report

Ms. Pais takes the lead of the session as newly elected Chair of the Committee and continues with the agenda. She gives the floor to Mr. López de Avila, who delivered a thorough presentation on global tourism performance, skills gaps, and UN Tourism education initiatives:

-State of Global Tourism (2024–2025)

- Tourism activity has fully returned to 2019 levels
- Revenue has increased by 15% compared to 2019
- Tourism provides 300 million jobs worldwide
- Tourism represents 1 in 10 new jobs globally

-Skills Gap

- 70% of tourism workers in Africa and South Asia have low qualifications
- Up to 50% in Central America and Arab States
- European Union: approx. 25%

By 2030, 1 million new workers per year will require vocational training. Youth form 50% of the global tourism workforce, yet 1 in 5 young people are not in education, employment, or training.

-UN Tourism's 360° Education Framework

Covers six pillars:

- Secondary education
- Higher education
- Executive education
- Online learning
- International Academies
- Quality assurance via TedQual certification

-Higher Education Initiatives

International Bachelor's in Tourism (HSLU – Lucerne, Switzerland)

- 1st cohort: 28 students
- 2nd cohort: 40 students

Scholarships offered by Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and others

-Co-branded Master's programs with:

- Basque Culinary Center (Spain)
- Anáhuac University (Mexico)
- Beijing International Studies University (China)
- Macau University of Tourism

Scholarships funded by partner universities and institutions

-Executive Education

- Over 4,000 professionals trained since 2019
- Strong participation from Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Andorra, and EU Member States
- New programs focused on generative AI and digital transformation

UN Tourism Online Academy

One of the flagship projects:

- 55,000+ active learners
- Courses offered in EN, ES, FR, AR, CH
- 50+ courses developed with 20+ partners
- AI-based tutor system deployed for instant learner support
- 8,000 scholarships granted (2022–2025)

-AI-Powered Learning via WhatsApp

Pilot programs in:

- Spain (Food & Beverage)
- El Salvador (Family Tourism)
- Chile (Rural Tourism)
- Global Tourism Ambassadors

Goal: reach learners with limited internet access.

-International Academies

Progress in:

- Uzbekistan (International Summer Academy & Teacher Development Program)
- Saudi Arabia (Riyadh School of Tourism & Hospitality)
- Zimbabwe
- Dominican Republic
- Zambia
- Bulgaria
- Iran

Uzbekistan's Academy video was showcased highlighting their new state-of-the-art facilities.

-Quality Assurance (TedQual)

- Nearly 300 certified tourism programs
- Certification growing in Asia-Pacific, Europe, and recently the Middle East
- Strategic objective: expand in Africa and the Americas

Open Discussion

Ms Pais thanks the contribution of Mr. and continues with the next item in the agenda, the open discussion.

Several members took the floor:

Dr. Maryam Awadh, Director of Curriculum Quality and Impact Tourism Capability Deputyship, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, highlighted:

- The success of hosting the 26th UN Tourism General Assembly in Riyadh in November 2025
- Strong cooperation with UN Tourism
- Major contributions to global scholarships and digital education

Ms. Anouck Weiss, from Sommet Education Foundation/ Sommet Education Proposed:

- Enhanced collaboration
- Increased scholarship contributions
- New initiatives in Africa and India
- Meeting with UN Tourism early 2026 to plan expanded cooperation

Mr. Mohammed Khattouch, Director ISTAHT, Kingdom of Morocco Expressed:

- Enthusiasm for collaboration
- Willingness to explore student exchanges and capacity-building initiatives

He commended UN Tourism for achievements under the Education 2025 umbrella

Ms. Megan EplerWood PhD., Cornell University Reported:

- Over 350 scholarships distributed for sustainable destination management
- Proposal for online expert sessions for 1,100 alumni in 2025

Presented new research showing:

- Most tourism and hospitality schools worldwide do not teach climate accounting or climate action skills
- Proposed establishing a special task group on climate education within the committee

The Chair welcomed the proposal and expressed interest in integrating climate competencies across all training programs.

Decision on UN Tourism Online Academy Scholarships package distribution for 2025/26 period

Mr. López de Avila presented an overview of the UN Tourism's Scholarship Programme, emphasizing its importance in providing global access to high-quality online educational content.

He recalled that the Organization offers 2,000 scholarships annually, allocated on the basis of the UNDP Human Development Index to ensure support for countries with lower levels of development.

The current distribution of countries by development level includes:

- Africa: 47 countries
- Asia-Pacific: 14 countries
- Americas: 8 countries

- Middle East: 2 countries
- Europe: 1 country

Proposed Allocation for 2026

To ensure fairness and impact, the Secretariat proposed the following allocation for 2026:

- Africa: 50% (1,000 scholarships)
- Asia and the Pacific: 30% (600 scholarships)
- Americas: 20% (400 scholarships)

These scholarships constitute the Organization's core annual contribution and do not include those provided through partnerships, academies, or the Saudi Arabia Scholarship Programme.

Scholarship Redemption Data for 2024–2025

A total of 8100 scholarships were awarded during the period, including:

- 5000 specific package scholarships granted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- 2000 annual UN Tourism scholarships
- 1,100 extraordinary scholarships granted through the Secretary-General's engagement with Member States

-Regional distribution and redemption rates:

- Africa: 2,713 awarded / 528 redeemed (19.34%)
- Pacific: 691 awarded / 140 redeemed
- Americas: 1,600 awarded / 174 redeemed
- Europe: 625 awarded / 119 redeemed
- Middle East: 1,945 awarded / 294 redeemed

-Mr. López de Avila highlighted significant variation in redemption rates was noted across regions and countries. Some Member States demonstrated strong utilization, while others faced challenges in redeeming their allocations.

-Mr. López de Avila proposed prioritizing countries that redeemed more than 50% of their scholarships last year. This approach aims to incentivize effective promotion and ensure that scholarships reach the intended beneficiaries.

-The Secretariat intends to conduct further analysis to:

- Understand barriers faced by low-redemption countries

- Identify student profiles benefiting most from the programme
- Collect testimonials to improve communication and outreach

-The Chair thanked Mr. López de Avila for the comprehensive presentation and noted the importance of strengthening communication in Member States to ensure wider awareness of the scholarships.

Several Members welcomed the proposal and emphasized the need for improved outreach, particularly to young people who could significantly benefit from such opportunities.

-The Chair confirmed broad support for the proposed distribution for 2026 and the was officially accepted

Outcomes of the session

-In closing, the Chair highlighted the following achievements of the session:

- Successful start of the new mandate and election of the Chair and Vice-Chair
- Review of the team's work during 2025
- Endorsement of the scholarship distribution proposal for 2026
- Agreement to continue cooperation on specific proposals raised by Member States and partner institutions

-The Chair expressed appreciation for the dedication of the team in Riyadh and Madrid and acknowledged the positive impact of their contributions.

Closing Remarks

The newly elected Chair, Ms. Pais, expressed her gratitude to the Member States, the academic institutions, the UN Tourism Education Team, and all participants.

She reiterated her commitment to fostering collaborative governance and to advancing tourism education in an inclusive and effective manner.

To conclude the proceedings, Ms. Pais invited all Members to gather for an official group photograph.

Following the photograph, Ms. Pais formally brought the session to a close.