

**Executive Council**

126th session  
Toledo, Spain

10 -11 June 2026

**Agenda item 3****Communication of the Secretary-General:  
Management vision for 2026-2029**

CE/126/3  
Madrid, 4 June 2026  
Original: English

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**Management Vision 2026-2029: A New foundation for global tourism****Executive summary**

The 126th session of the Executive Council is the first to take place under the Secretary-General's mandate, following her assumption of office on 1 January 2026. This communication sets out the strategic direction that will guide UN Tourism from 2026-2029, ahead of the more detailed proposals that will be presented to the Council for endorsement.

In the first months of her mandate, the Secretary-General has focused on understanding the Organization: listening to Member States across all six regions, conducting a department-by-department review of the Secretariat, and engaging external consultants to undertake a comprehensive institutional assessment. That work, together with the audits and reports of recent years have identified consistent areas where the foundations of the Organization must be strengthened. No priority of the Organization can be delivered durably until those foundations are in order. Addressing them is therefore central to the mandate.

Three principles will guide the mandate: building foundations that will outlast the mandate; placing Member States at the heart of the Organization and committing to the depth and quality of delivery. These principles are aligned with the agenda of UN reform initiatives. The four operational priorities that flow from them are Foundations, Collaboration, Capacity Building and Sustainability, with Foundations as the immediate priority. Delivery will draw on the regular budget, voluntary contributions from Member States and the Tourism Acceleration Fund offered by the United Arab Emirates. The Fund will accelerate implementation of this management vision.

**DRAFT DECISION<sup>1</sup>**

Agenda item 3

**Communication of the Secretary-General: Management vision for 2026-2029**  
(document CE/126/3)

The Executive Council,

*Having examined* the communication of the Secretary-General on her management vision for the period 2026-2029 (document CE/126/3),

1. *Welcomes* the management vision presented by the Secretary-General, as a preliminary indication of the strategic direction of her mandate, ahead of the more detailed proposals that will be presented to the Council for endorsement;
2. *Endorses* the three guiding principles that will frame the mandate: building new institutional Foundations, placing Member States at the core of the work of the Organization, and committing to depth and quality of delivery, in alignment with the agenda of UN reform initiatives;
3. *Endorses* the four priorities set out by the Secretary-General: Foundations, Collaboration, Capacity Building and Sustainability;
4. *Takes note* of the strategic assessment of the state of the Organization presented in the communication and supports prioritizing the Foundations as the immediate priority of the mandate and a vital investment in the long-term standing of the Organization, to be addressed with rigour and transparency;
5. *Welcomes* the Tourism Acceleration Fund initiative supported by the United Arab Emirates, announced by the Secretary-General during the 123rd session of the Executive Council in Segovia, as a transformative resourcing partnership for the implementation of this management vision.
6. *Requests* the Secretary-General:
  - (a) To present the deployment strategy of the Tourism Acceleration Fund to the Executive Council and the strengthened Programme of Work for the 2026-2027 biennium for endorsement and to consult the Council on the progress of the organizational structure of the Secretariat as that work matures;
  - (b) To continue the Foundations and reform programme launched during the first months of her mandate and to keep Members fully and regularly informed of progress; and
  - (c) To report at each session of the Executive Council until the 27th session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the recommendations of oversight bodies and on the broader accountability framework of the Organization.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Executive Council, please refer to the Decisions document issued at the end of the session.

## I. Introduction: First Executive Council of a new mandate

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1. The present communication is the first Communication of the Secretary-General to the Executive Council under her current mandate. It proceeds from a straightforward conviction: UN Tourism must become—and must be seen to be—an institution worthy of the sector it represents, a sector that today accounts for close to 6%<sup>2</sup> of jobs globally, generates an estimated 3,5% of global GDP, and welcomed more than 1.5 billion international arrivals in 2025. The five policy areas the Secretary-General presented to the Membership in Segovia: Responsible Tourism, Capacity Building, Technology for Good, Innovative Financing and Smart Governance remain the policy compass for the mandate. The present communication therefore focuses on the institutional direction and management approach through which those commitments will be delivered.
2. This document is intentionally strategic and high-level. The more detailed proposals to be submitted to the Executive Council for endorsement, including the deployment strategy of the Tourism Acceleration Fund and the strengthened Programme of Work for the 2026-2027 biennium, will build on the direction set out herein. The Secretary-General will also continue to keep the Council informed as work on the organizational structure of the Secretariat matures.
3. The Secretary-General has used the first five months of her mandate to assess the state of the Organization. She has held more than 35 ministerial bilateral and 30 ambassadorial meetings, and personally led the Secretariat's presence at three Regional Commission meetings Kuwait (Middle East), Paraguay (Americas), and Malta (Europe).
4. This underscores a leadership approach grounded in direct engagement with Member States, ensuring the Organisation's priorities are informed by dialogue, partnership and practical delivery needs across all regions. In parallel, she conducted a Secretariat-wide review of operations, and engaged external consultants to assess the institution's operational and risk framework. The Secretary-General has also activated strategic partnerships across the United Nations system, including with UNESCO, UNEP, UN-Habitat, OECD, FAO and ICAO, inaugurated a new Thematic Office in Rabat for African Innovation and advanced arrangements for the establishment of the Thematic Office in Samarkand for the Silk Road.
5. This communication should also be read alongside the other reports submitted to this session of the Council. It provides the strategic framing; the dedicated reports provide the detail. The Secretary-General has been mindful not to duplicate their content.
6. The Secretary-General assumes full responsibility for the strategic direction set out in the present communication and for the actions undertaken since 1 January 2026. Matters before the Council that pre-date her mandate will be addressed in good faith, in the best interests of the Organization. She reaffirms her commitment to working with the Membership and the Secretariat to strengthen the accountability and transparency expected of a specialized agency of the United Nations system.

## II. The Organization at the start of the present mandate (January 2026)

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7. UN Tourism is the United Nations specialized agency for tourism. Its mandate is one of decisive importance to its 161 Member States and six Associate Members, to the more than 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, academia and destination authorities, and to the millions of communities whose livelihoods depend on a sector that today generates close to one in ten jobs globally and is uniquely positioned to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
8. UN Tourism's operating environment has continued to evolve, and successive reports and audits - conducted by United Nations oversight bodies, external auditors, and at the request of Member States - have identified consistent areas where the Foundations of the institution require strengthening. The first months of the mandate, together with the Secretariat-wide review conducted between January and April 2026, have enabled the Secretary-General to identify the

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<sup>2</sup> Tourism accounted for an average of 5.7 per cent of global employment over the period 2015-2024.

scale of work required. This work will require sustained institutional reform, supported by the Tourism Acceleration Fund described in section V.

9. To support this process, the Secretary-General has engaged external consultants to assess the institution's structures, processes, operational fundamentals and risk profile. The assessment is intended to provide the Membership with a clear baseline from which to guide reform priorities and measure progress. The Secretary-General will report to the Council, in full transparency, on the findings of the assessment.
10. This baseline informs the present management vision and explains why Foundations is the first of the four operational priorities set out below.

### **III. The strategic baseline of the mandate**

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11. Three principles will frame the entire mandate. The four operational priorities that follow from them are set out in section IV.

#### **Foundations first**

12. No priority of the Organization can be delivered durably until the Foundations are in order. The Secretary-General has therefore chosen to prioritize the Foundations work during the early phase of her mandate, with the support of the Tourism Acceleration Fund provided by the United Arab Emirates. The work covers transparent governance, robust internal controls, evidence-based policymaking, financial discipline, modern human-resources practice, ethics and compliance, together with the operational backbone of the Secretariat. The objective is to build an operating model that serves Members beyond the present mandate.

#### **Member States at the core**

13. UN Tourism is, ultimately, a Membership-led organization. The Secretary-General's first commitment is to the 161 Member States who entrust the Secretariat with their mandate. The relevance of UN Tourism will be measured by the value it delivers to its Members - in policy advice, in technical cooperation, in capacity building, in convening, and in the trusted institutional voice it lends to the global tourism agenda. Every priority and every line of investment in this management vision will be tested against that standard.

#### **Depth and quality of delivery**

14. The Organization will commit to a smaller number of priorities, pursued with greater depth and discipline, rather than to a wider mandate delivered without the resources to do justice to it. This represents an alignment between the mandate, the resources, and the standard of delivery the Membership is entitled to expect from a specialized agency of the United Nations system.
15. These three principles are deliberately aligned with the agenda of UN reform initiatives, notably around the values of effectiveness, accountability, prioritization and proximity to the people and Member States the system serves. UN Tourism will play its full part in that renewal.

### **IV. Priorities for the period 2026-2029**

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16. Within this strategic baseline, the Secretariat will pursue four operational priorities: Foundations, Collaboration, Capacity Building and Sustainability - which together form the delivery architecture for the policy commitments presented by the Secretary-General in Segovia.

#### **Priority 1: Foundations**

17. The Foundations work will strengthen the institutional, operational and accountability frameworks of the Organization.

## Priority 2: Collaboration

18. Collaboration will be advanced along three axes:
- (a) Between Member States—facilitating the transfer of knowledge, best practices and policies between mature and emerging tourism destinations, and reinforcing the role of the Regional Commissions as platforms of structured dialogue;
  - (b) Between the public and the private sector—leveraging the network of more than 500 Affiliate Members, and bringing private investment closer to the policy needs of Member States; and
  - (c) With the United Nations system and other international organizations—deepening the partnerships activated during the first semester, including those with UNESCO, UNEP, UN-Habitat, OECD, FAO, ICAO, WIPO and others, in order to align strategies and amplify collective impact.

## Priority 3: Capacity Building

19. Capacity building is the single most consistent demand expressed by Member States. Industry projections point to a workforce shortfall of more than 40 million in tourism by 2035. The Organization will respond by strengthening the UN Tourism Academy, which today serves over 60,000 online and 20,000 in-person users globally, expanding its network of Affiliate Members and academic partners, and aligning technical-cooperation programmes with the sector's most pressing skills gaps. Particular attention will be paid to youth and women, and to the needs of Africa, Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and post-crisis settings.

## Priority 4: Sustainability

20. Sustainability will be pursued across its three established dimensions - social, environmental and economic, through the integration of climate action, heritage conservation and social empowerment into national tourism strategies. UN Tourism's contribution to the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism (IY2027) will frame much of this work, alongside partnerships with UNEP, UNESCO, FAO Mountain Partnership and other system actors. The Organization will continue to position community wellbeing, the protection of cultural and natural heritage, and economic viability as inseparable priorities.

## V. Resourcing the vision

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21. The vision will be resourced through three sources to implement the priorities set out above in close alignment with the approved Programme of Work for 2026-2027, which was the result of a deep consultation process with the Member States (80% of Members directly contributed through a survey).
22. First, the regular budget of the Organization, which the Secretary-General is committed to managing with rigour, transparency and a sustained focus on cost discipline. The detailed financial assessment by the external auditor (Spain) is presented in the Audited Financial Statements for the year 2025 submitted to this session.
23. Second, voluntary contributions from Member States. The Secretary-General expresses her gratitude for the contributions already received and announced.
24. Third, the Tourism Acceleration Fund offered by the United Arab Emirates. Announced by the Secretary-General in Segovia (123rd Executive Council session), ahead of her election, the Fund is intended not as a substitute for the regular budget but as a catalytic instrument to accelerate institutional reform and strengthen delivery across the Organization's operational priorities.
25. As committed by the Secretary-General before the Membership, the Fund will be transparent, fair and inclusive. A dedicated implementation framework, provisionally referred to as Project UNI-T, is being developed to accelerate delivery of the Programme of Work, beginning with Foundations. The detailed framework will be submitted to the Executive Council for approval.

26. The deployment of the Fund will be guided by three principles:
- (a) Alignment with the priorities decided by the Membership;
  - (b) Geographic balance; and
  - (c) Full transparency in governance, with regular reporting to the Executive Council on commitments, disbursements and outcomes.

## **VI. The way forward**

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27. Following review by the Programme and Budget Committee, the Executive Council will be invited to approve the deployment strategy and implementation framework of the Tourism Acceleration Fund, and the strengthened Programme of Work for the 2026-2027 biennium and to endorse the accountability framework of the Organization, under which the Secretary-General will report to the Membership. Progress on the organizational structure of the Secretariat will be the subject of regular consultation with the Council as that work matures.
28. The Secretary-General will remain in close, continuous dialogue with the Membership through the Regional Commissions, the Committees of the Executive Council and General Assembly, and her open-door policy with Ambassadors in Madrid and capital-based authorities.
29. The Secretary-General invites the Executive Council to take note of the present preliminary communication and to support the directions set out herein.

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