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Agenda item 11
Regional and Thematic Offices

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Update on the Regional and Thematic Offices since the 126th session of the Executive Council

Executive summary

This report provides the Executive Council with updated information, as of 30 September 2026, on the status of UN Tourism Offices following the 126th session of the Executive Council, held in Toledo, Spain, on 10 and 11 June 2026.

It addresses the establishment of Offices, the status of the applicable agreements, and implementation of the relevant governing-body decisions. Programme delivery is covered in the report on the implementation of the Programme of Work (CE/127/4).

Further action concerns completion of the legal arrangements with Morocco and Uruguay, alignment of the financial and administrative arrangements with Uzbekistan, conclusion of the arrangements for the Regional Office in Shanghai, and the ongoing institutional integration of the Regional Support Office for Asia and the Pacific in Japan.

As negotiations with Member States are currently ongoing, the Secretariat shall update the Executive Council of any further developments for information and/or consideration at its 127th session.

UN Tourism

DRAFT DECISION[1]

Agenda item 11
Regional and Thematic Offices
(document CE/127/11)

The Executive Council,

Having examined the report,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 740(XXIV) and 785(XXVI), and Executive Council decision 12(CXXVI),

1. *Takes note* of the status of the Offices and the ongoing discussions between the Secretariat and the Member States regarding their legal, financial and administrative arrangements;

2. *Reaffirms* that the establishment and operation of Offices shall be in compliance with the applicable Legal and Operational Framework adopted by the General Assembly, and that any proposed deviation therefrom shall require prior express approval by the competent governing body;

3. *Encourages* the Government of Morocco to complete the remaining procedures for the entry into force of the Host Country Agreement and requests the Secretary-General to report on their completion, taking into account the conditions governing provisional application;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue consultations with the Government of Uruguay on the extension of the Cooperation Agreement beyond 28 February 2027 with a view to ensuring the continuity of the Observatory's programme of work, legal framework and financial arrangements;

5. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue negotiations with Uzbekistan to align the financial and administrative arrangements concerning the Thematic Office with the applicable Legal and Operational Framework;

6. *Recalls* the authorization granted in decision 12(CXXVI) to prepare, finalize and sign the Host Country Agreement for the Regional Office in Shanghai, subject to full compliance with the Framework;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report on its implementation and the status of the related arrangements;

8. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue the reform of RSOAP through the establishment of legally binding arrangements between UN Tourism and Japan in accordance with the Category I criteria, and to ensure that any commitments or liabilities resulting from the dissolution of APTEC are appropriately assessed and are covered by adequate funding from the Government of Japan; and

9. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to keep reporting to the Executive Council on progress regarding UN Tourism Offices, including the status of agreements, outstanding legal and financial conditions, and any matters requiring further approval.

[1] 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. Background

1. The present report provides an update on the establishment and legal and other institutional arrangements of UN Tourism's Regional and Thematic Offices, including the reform of the Regional Support Office for Asia and the Pacific. It addresses the implementation of relevant decisions of the governing bodies, the conclusion and application of agreements with host Governments, and the outstanding requirements for the establishment, operation or institutional integration of the Offices. Reporting on the implementation of their programmes of work is undertaken separately in document CE/127/4.

2. The General Assembly, at its 24th session, adopted the Legal and Operational Framework on the Selection and Establishment of Regional and Thematic Offices[2] through resolution 740(XXIV). In 2025, at its 26th session, the Assembly approved the revised Framework[3] through resolution 785(XXVI) as prepared by the Working Group for the Improvement of the Legal and Operational Framework on the Selection and Establishment of Regional and Thematic Offices. This Framework should be read together with the Statutes of the Organization, applicable regulations and rules, the conditions and criteria for Category I entities adopted by the Assembly through resolution 656(XXI), and the relevant decisions of the Governing Bodies and agreements concerning each Office, and aim at ensuring consistency with the position of the other United Nations system field presence.

3. The institutional model provides for Regional and Thematic Offices to form an integral part of the Organization, under the authority of the Secretary-General and subject to the Organization's applicable regulations and rules. The Programme of Work of Offices is approved by the Governing Bodies of the Organization. Establishing an Office therefore requires arrangements that safeguard the Organization's legal status, institutional independence and managerial authority, while securing the resources and facilities necessary for its functioning.

4. The legal, financial and operational arrangements are reflected in the instruments agreed with the host Government. The host country agreement addresses the legal status of the Organization's presence and the privileges, immunities, facilities and other conditions necessary for its functioning. Financial and administrative matters such as host-country contributions, the provision of premises and services, and the administration of resources in accordance with the Organization's applicable rules, may be incorporated into the host country agreement or under separate arrangements. The instruments and requirements applicable to each Office must be assessed together with the relevant decisions of the Governing Bodies to ensure compliance. Any proposal received by the Secretariat which would fall outside the terms of the existing authorization must be submitted to the Council for consideration.

5. Approval of a proposal to establish an Office, authorization to negotiate or sign an agreement, signature, entry into force and commencement of operations are distinct steps. The requirements and sequence applicable in each case depend on the relevant instruments and authorizations. Where provisional application or *interim* arrangements have been agreed, their scope, duration and any restrictions on activities must also be identified.

6. The Secretary-General conducts negotiations and implements the relevant arrangements within the applicable framework and authorizations, while matters requiring approval are submitted to the competent governing body. Accordingly, the following sections are structured to separately discuss the confirmed legal and operational position of each Office, developments since the previous report, outstanding requirements and any further action requested of the Executive Council.

[2] A/24/10 rev.1, paragraphs 10-39.
[3] A/26/8 rev.1, pages 17-21.

II. Status of established Offices

A. Saudi Arabia – Regional Office for the Middle East

7. The Regional Office for the Middle East is established in Riyadh pursuant to the Host Country Agreement signed on 17 September 2020, following Executive Council decision 5(CXII), ratified by the General Assembly in resolution 740(XXIV).

8. During the reporting period, no material developments or issues affecting the implementation of the arrangements governing the Regional Office for the Middle East have been identified. No additional decision by the Executive Council is sought in respect of these arrangements at its present session.

B. Brazil – Regional Office for the Americas

9. The Regional Office for the Americas is established in Rio de Janeiro pursuant to the Host Country Agreement signed on 19 October 2023, following General Assembly resolution 763(XXV).

10. In resolution 785(XXVI), the General Assembly approved the Protocol between the Federative Republic of Brazil and the World Tourism Organization concerning the Annual Financial Contribution by Brazil to UN Tourism for the Regional Office for the Americas (hereafter "the Protocol"), signed on 26 January 2024, and the Agreement concerning the Office's financial and administrative arrangements, signed on 1 November 2024. These instruments form part of the legal and financial basis for the Office's operation.

11. Under the aforementioned Protocol, Brazil's annual financial contribution for the period 2024-2026 was established[4], with the same amount to be maintained for subsequent financial years unless adjusted by the Executive Council or the General Assembly.

12. With the completion of the conditions established for the entry into force of the Host Country Agreement, the Office commenced operations in March 2025.

13. During the reporting period, no material developments or issues affecting the implementation of the arrangements governing the Regional Office for the Americas have been identified. No additional decision by the Executive Council is sought in respect of these instruments at its present session.

III. Progress on the establishment of Offices

A. Morocco – Thematic Office on Innovation for Africa

14. The Host Country Agreement signed on 28 January 2025 and the Agreement on the financial and administrative arrangements signed on 29 May 2025 were approved by the General Assembly in resolution 785(XXVI).

15. Through the Exchange of Notifications of 20 and 21 April 2026, the Parties agreed on **provisional application** of the Host Country Agreement pursuant to its Article 10(2), pending completion of the requirements for its entry into force. UN Tourism's acceptance expressly provided that commencement of activities at the Office and recruitment of Office personnel would take effect upon entry into force of the Host Country Agreement.

16. In decision 12(CXXVI), the Executive Council took note of the provisional arrangements and encouraged the Government to complete the remaining procedures to allow the entry into force of the Host Country Agreement.

[4] The contribution for 2024 was received pro-rata effective 7 August 2024.

17. As at the date of the present report, the Secretariat has not received the Government of Morocco's written notification confirming completion of the internal procedures necessary for the Host Country Agreement to enter into force. The Agreement has therefore not yet entered into force and remains under provisional application, subject to the conditions described above. No activities have commenced at the Office.

18. The Council is invited to take note of the updated position and, insofar as requirements remain outstanding, to encourage their completion.

B. Uruguay – Tourism Law Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (Thematic Office)

19. The establishment of the Tourism Law Observatory in Montevideo was ratified by the General Assembly through resolution 785(XXVI). Its arrangements comprise the Cooperation Agreement with the Ministry of Tourism, signed on 3 September 2024, and the Agreement on its interim legal status concluded through the Exchange of Letters of 2 and 11 September 2025. These instruments were approved by the General Assembly through resolutions 777(XXVI) and 785(XXVI).

20. The interim legal-status agreement approved by the General Assembly provides for the application to UN Tourism, with the necessary adaptations, of the provisions of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between UNDP and Uruguay of 12 December 1985, pending conclusion of a permanent Host Country Agreement. Accordingly, the outstanding permanent agreement should be distinguished from the interim legal arrangements already approved for the Observatory.

21. On 10 April 2026, the Parties extended the Cooperation Agreement until 28 February 2027. In decision 12(CXXVI), the Executive Council encouraged further consultations on its extension beyond that date and to report any progress made to the present session.

22. As at the date of the present report, consultations with the Ministry of Tourism of Uruguay on the extension of the Cooperation Agreement beyond 28 February 2027 remain ongoing.

23. The Council is invited to take note of the progress and to support the completion of the outstanding arrangements and any potential extension of the Cooperation Agreement, provided that all necessary conditions are met.

C. Uzbekistan – Thematic Office on Tourism on the Silk Road

24. In decision 12(CXXVI), the Executive Council took note of the Host Country Agreement signed on 8 November 2025 and of the cancellation of the version signed on 2 July 2025.

25. Article 14(1) of the Host Country Agreement makes its entry into force subject to approval by the Executive Council, subject to ratification by the General Assembly; written notification by the Government of completion of its internal legal requirements; and entry into force of the supplementary financial and administrative agreement. The Government's notification, received on 22 April 2026, addresses the domestic-procedures requirement. Confirmation of the entry into force of the Host Country Agreement requires consideration of all the conditions specified in Article 14(1).

26. As reported at the previous session[5], in accordance with resolution 785(XXVI), the Secretariat and the Government of Uzbekistan have been working on the Agreement for the Financial and Administrative Arrangements, in order to align it with the applicable Legal and Operational Framework, particularly regarding the administration of the host-country contribution for 2026-2027, the Secretary-General's authority over the allocation and reallocation of expenses, the treatment of unspent balances within the biennium, and the applicable reporting and audit arrangements.

[5] CE/126/12 rev. 1, paragraph 25.

27. The Government has requested that the proposed final Agreement for the Financial and Administrative Arrangements be agreed upon through an Exchange of Notes Verbales.

28. As at the date of the present report, consultations with the Government of Uzbekistan on the Agreement for the Financial and Administrative Arrangements remain ongoing, with a view to aligning its provisions with the approved Legal and Operational Framework. The Secretariat is therefore not yet in a position to confirm fulfilment of all the conditions required for the entry into force of the Host Country Agreement and commencement of the Office's operations.

29. The Council is invited to take note of the outstanding requirements and to support completion of arrangements consistent with the approved Framework. Completion of the requirements for entry into force and commencement of operations will be reported once all applicable conditions and approvals have been confirmed.

D. China – Regional Office in Shanghai

30. Through resolution 785(XXVI), the General Assembly approved the proposal to establish a Regional Office in Shanghai, China, subject to further discussions within the Regional Commissions for East Asia and the Pacific and for South Asia concerning the distribution of roles between the proposed Office and the Regional Support Office for Asia and the Pacific (RSOAP) in Japan.

31. In decision 12(CXXVI), the Executive Council considered the consultations requested by the General Assembly on the distribution of roles completed, and authorized the Secretary-General to prepare, finalize and sign the Host Country Agreement with the Government of China, provided that it is in full compliance with the Legal and Operational Framework adopted in resolution 785(XXVI).

32. As at the date of the present report, negotiations with the Government of China on the Host Country Agreement, including the financial and administrative arrangements of the Office, remain ongoing. The Host Country Agreement has not yet been signed. The Secretariat will report on progress towards its finalization and signature under the authorization granted in decision 12(CXXVI), subject to full compliance with the approved Legal and Operational Framework, and on the outstanding requirements for its entry into force and commencement of the Office's operations.

33. The Council is invited to take note of progress in implementing its authorization. The Secretariat will report the instruments concluded and the outstanding steps before operations commence.

IV. Reform of the Regional Support Office for Asia and the Pacific

34. The Regional Support Office for Asia and the Pacific (RSOAP) in Japan is undergoing an institutional reform intended to integrate it fully into UN Tourism as a Category I entity, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 656(XXI) and 785(XXVI). The reform concerns the legal and administrative basis of an existing Office, including its relationship with the Japanese foundation Asia-Pacific Tourism Exchange Center (APTEC), which has supported its functioning since its inception in 1995.

35. Under the Category I framework, RSOAP is to form an integral part of the Organization and operate exclusively under its legal framework, regulations and rules. This includes the legal personality of RSOAP and its capacity to enter into contracts separately from APTEC, and recruitment and engagement of personnel under UN Tourism rules, regulations and procedures, with the exclusion of any single national law. Full integration therefore requires legally binding arrangements that give effect to these conditions.

36. Through resolution 785(XXVI), the General Assembly approved interim arrangements between UN Tourism and the Japan Tourism Agency through an Exchange of Letters concerning RSOAP's legal and operational framework. A Memorandum of Cooperation concerning JTA's financial contribution to RSOAP's operation and maintenance was subsequently signed on 20 November 2025. In decision 12(CXXVI), the Executive Council took note of that Memorandum and confirmed that the reform remained ongoing.

37. The outstanding requirement is to complete legal, financial and administrative arrangements that are binding on both UN Tourism and Japan and consistent with the Category I criteria. These arrangements must secure the necessary legal protections, funding and administrative conditions for the Office's functioning. The interim arrangements and financial contribution mechanism should therefore be distinguished from completion of the institutional reform.

38. A further component of the reform concerns the dissolution of APTEC – expected on 31 December 2026 – and the transition to the independent operation of RSOAP under the Category I framework. This requires identification and assessment of all APTEC's assets, contractual relationships, personnel arrangements and actual or contingent liabilities connected with RSOAP. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that the integration of RSOAP proceeds in an orderly and legally secure manner, and that no contract, liability or other commitment made independently by APTEC is assumed by the Secretariat, expressly or by implication, without prior review and formal approval in accordance with the Organization's rules and procedures. Any proposed transfer to UN Tourism will remain subject, as appropriate, to acceptance by the Organization.

39. The Secretariat acknowledges the continued engagement of the Government of Japan, in particular the Japan Tourism Agency. As at the date of the present report, conversations with the Government of Japan over the legal arrangements of RSOAP remain ongoing. The Secretariat is currently assessing APTEC's assets and obligations connected to RSOAP.

40. The Council is invited to take note of the progress made and to reiterate the requirement to complete the reform in accordance with the Category I framework. The Secretary-General will continue reporting on outstanding requirements, and any matter requiring further consideration and approval by the Executive Council.

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