

Global Tourism Crisis Committee Meets Again to Explore Safe Travel in Age of Vaccines

Madrid, Spain, 21 January 2021 - *The Global Tourism Crisis Committee has met for the first time in 2021. Organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the cross-sector body met in Madrid during the 113th session of the UNWTO Executive Council to advance solid plans to restart tourism. Key outputs from the meeting focused on the integration of vaccines into a harmonized approach to safe travel and launching a coordinated effort to boost confidence in the sector.*

With countries around the world now rolling out vaccines against the COVID-19 virus, the Committee noted that this opens a critical window in the fight against the pandemic and to promote the safe resumption of international travel. Members highlighted the importance of stepping up coordination, within the framework of the International Health Regulations, of vaccination certificates to ensure the implementation of common, harmonized digital related travel principles, protocols and documents. This would be in line with the work being carried out by the World Health Organization (WHO), which has reported at potential applications of digital technology to enable safe international travel and facilitate arrivals and departures.

Harmonized plans and protocols the priority

The Committee's own **Technical Group**, chaired by Greece, alongside a dedicated inter-agency group drawing on diverse parts of the United Nations system and international organizations, are working to ensure measures are implemented, including by governments, to foster their application at every level of tourism. The Technical Group Chairman Harry Theocharis provided his latest update, showing how **concrete steps have been taken** to guarantee a harmonized plan of action.

UNWTO Secretary-General Pololikashvili said: "The rollout of vaccines is a step in the right direction, but the restart of tourism cannot wait. Vaccines must be part of a wider, coordinated approach that includes certificates and passes for safe cross-border travel. In the longer-term, we also need to restore confidence in tourism. The United for Travel campaign will help us achieve this, providing a clear and strong message that safe tourism is now possible."

Testing for safe and seamless travel

Alongside the Technical Group's work, the Committee called for support of the OECD's own initiative aimed at developing a harmonized system of border controls. This would

be developed in coordination with UNWTO as well as with WHO and, representing the civil aviation and the maritime sectors respectively, ICAO and the IMO.

The Crisis Committee members also called for firm actions to Support the standardization, digitalization and interoperability of testing protocols and certification systems. Members agreed that these should be based on commonly agreed evidence and risk-assessment indicators for origin and destination country or territory. The implementation of the CART Take-Off Guidance, developed by ICAO, was identified as an effective tool for advancing the harmonization of testing protocols and accelerating the establishment of Public Health Corridors.

Committee draws on top expertise and leadership

Since the start of the crisis, UNWTO has convened the Committee to bring together governments, public and private sector leaders and international organizations to form a **united and efficient response**. Addressing this latest meeting were Margaritis Schinas, Vice President of the European Commission, OECD Secretary-General Ángel Gurría, and both tourism ministers from UNWTO's Member States and leading representatives of from the civil aviation and cruise tourism sectors. Joining them and ensuring the United Nations speaks with one voice were Fang Liu, Secretary-General and Kitack Lim, Secretary-General of IMO.

The Global Tourism Crisis Committee met against the backdrop of the **113th session of the UNWTO Executive Council**, also being held in Madrid as a hybrid event. The Council brings together more than 150 in-person participants alongside participants representing governments and destinations of every global region, to advance UNWTO's Programme of Work and to vote for the Organization's Secretary-General for 2022-2025.

A full list of participants in the January meeting of the Global Tourism Crisis Committee can be found here.

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