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### Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

## Implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session the report of the World Tourism Organization submitted pursuant to Assembly resolution [70/200](#).

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\* [A/75/150](#).



## Report of the World Tourism Organization on the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

### *Summary*

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism serves as a framework of reference for sustainable tourism. It is a comprehensive set of basic principles aimed at guiding different stakeholders, such as Governments, the private sector and civil society, towards responsible and sustainable tourism development. The Code's objective is to minimize the negative impact of tourism on the environment, cultural heritage and communities while maximizing its benefits.

The Code of Ethics is a voluntary, non-binding instrument by nature, and the application of its content and provisions may be incorporated into legislation, regulations and professional codes. In order to reinforce the effectiveness of its provisions, the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics – the first international convention on tourism – was adopted in 2019 and is open for signature until 15 October 2020 by all States Members of the United Nations and members of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The present report, prepared by UNWTO pursuant to General Assembly resolution [70/200](#), offers an update on the implementation of the Code of Ethics. It provides an overview of the activities of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, elaborates on the adoption of the Framework Convention, presents a review of the implementation by the private sector of the Code of Ethics and lists other UNWTO activities in line with the principles of the Code. It also touches upon the impact of the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and possible inclusive responses to the crisis.

## I. Introduction

1. Adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in its resolution 406(XIII) and acknowledged in 2001 by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 56/212, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism<sup>1</sup> serves as a framework of reference for sustainable tourism. It constitutes a comprehensive set of basic principles aimed at guiding different stakeholders, such as Governments, the private sector and civil society, towards responsible and sustainable tourism development. Its objective is to minimize the negative impact of tourism on the environment, cultural heritage and communities while maximizing its benefits.

2. The Code of Ethics consists of a preamble, the principles (arts. 1–9) and a mechanism for their implementation (art. 10). Article 10 makes a direct reference to the World Committee on Tourism Ethics as the impartial third body responsible for the application and interpretation of the Code of Ethics and the settlement of disputes by means of conciliation.

3. Whereas the Code of Ethics is a voluntary, non-binding instrument by nature, the application of its content and provisions may be incorporated into legislation, regulations and professional codes. Moreover, in order to reinforce the effectiveness of its provisions, the Committee submitted to the UNWTO General Assembly in 2015 a proposal to convert the Code into an international convention. The Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics – the first international convention on tourism – was adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in its resolution 722(XXIII) at its twenty-third session, in 2019. The Convention is open for signature until 15 October 2020 by all States Members of the United Nations and members of UNWTO. Subsequent to that date, States may ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Convention.

4. UNWTO, through its programme of work and the Committee, encourages the implementation of the Code of Ethics. It is the specialized agency of the United Nations system responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism around the world in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## II. Activities of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics

5. The World Committee on Tourism Ethics was established in 2003 by resolution 469(XV) of the UNWTO General Assembly and underwent reform in 2011 by resolution 607(XIX). The Committee is an impartial body with the responsibility to interpret, apply and evaluate the provisions of the Code of Ethics, in addition to ensuring the promotion and dissemination of its ethical principles. Furthermore, once the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics enters into force, the Committee will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and for receiving the corresponding reports from the States parties. As a subsidiary organ of the UNWTO General Assembly, the Committee, through its Chair, reports directly to the Assembly. The Committee is composed of the Chair, eight members and three alternate members; all members are independent personalities who are elected in their personal capacity and not as officials of Governments or representatives of their respective administrations or private entities.

6. The Committee also oversees the reporting of the signatories of the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics. The Private Sector Commitment is a UNWTO initiative established in 2011 with the aim of enhancing the implementation of the Code in the corporate governance of the private sector. The Commitment is addressed to

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.unwto.org/global-code-of-ethics-for-tourism](http://www.unwto.org/global-code-of-ethics-for-tourism).

private tourism companies and their trade associations, and its signing represents a public adherence to the Code through which the signatories pledge to uphold and promote the ethical principles and to report to the Committee on their ethical business operations. It is important to highlight that the signatories' implementation survey is based on the companies' self-assessment, as the Private Sector Commitment to the Code is not a certification scheme. As at 30 June 2020, 450 companies and trade associations from 69 countries around the world were active signatories.

## A. Priorities of the Committee

7. Since the issuance of the previous report on the implementation of the Code of Ethics (see [A/70/224](#)), in July 2015, the Committee has met on eight occasions, during which it examined a wide array of ethical issues posing challenges to the tourism sector. A meeting scheduled to be held in Madrid in April 2020 was postponed owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, and a special online session on COVID-19 was held on 5 June 2020 with the presence of the UNWTO Secretary-General. As an outcome of the session, the Committee issued a statement underlining the need to abide by ethical principles when applying the necessary measures for supporting a post-COVID-19 tourism recovery (see para. 19 below).

8. Under Pascal Lamy, who was reconfirmed for a second four-year term (2018–2021), the Committee under its current composition<sup>2</sup> established the following main priority areas: (a) technology and digital platforms in tourism; (b) overtourism and its impact on host communities; (c) decent work and inclusive growth; (d) gender equality and socioeconomic empowerment; and (e) environmental sustainability. During the previous term of Mr. Lamy (2013–2017), the Committee addressed the following priority areas: (f) child protection in tourism; (g) accessible tourism for all; (h) unfounded ratings on travel portals which may have an impact on the reputation of companies and destinations; (i) poaching and the illegal trade in wildlife; and (j) promotion of fair models of all-inclusive holidays.

9. In addition, other pertinent topics considered by the Committee include indigenous tourism, accessible destinations, respect for intangible cultural heritage, rights of workers in tourism, and post-COVID-19 tourism.

10. As part of priority area (a) above, the Committee engaged in dialogue with Airbnb concerning the implementation of the principles of the Code of Ethics, in particular by digital platforms directly involved in the tourism sector.

## B. UNWTO Ethics Award

11. The UNWTO Ethics Award<sup>3</sup> is one of the activities of the Committee aimed at raising awareness of the Code of Ethics. Launched in 2016, the Award is given to tourism companies and trade associations that are official signatories of the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics and have reported actions that they have taken to implement the Code in their programmes and operations.

12. The jury of the Ethics Award is composed of the Chair and the full members of the Committee. In 2017, the recipient of the Award was ILUNION Hotels, in Spain, which was selected for its pioneering policies on universal accessibility in the hospitality industry. In 2018, Europa Mundo Vacaciones, a tour operator in Spain, won the Award for supporting more than 100 sustainable tourism projects in many countries. In 2019, the Award was issued to the Brazilian non-profit private institution

<sup>2</sup> Available at [www.unwto.org/members-2017-2021](http://www.unwto.org/members-2017-2021).

<sup>3</sup> See [www.unwto.org/unwto-ethics-award](http://www.unwto.org/unwto-ethics-award).

Serviço Social do Comércio, which is renowned for its wide range of recreational, educational and health programmes for socially disadvantaged groups.

### C. Recommendations and statements of the Committee

13. In 2013, at the twentieth session of the UNWTO General Assembly, the Committee presented the UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All, which were subsequently adopted by resolution 637(XX). The Recommendations highlighted appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have access in tourism, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information and means of communication and other services and facilities open to the public or for public use, in urban areas and in rural and coastal zones.

14. In follow-up, the Committee engaged in the development of the UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Information in Tourism, adopted in September 2015 by the UNWTO General Assembly in its resolution 669(XXI). The Recommendations were developed with the support and collaboration of the ONCE Foundation and the European Network for Accessible Tourism with the aim of providing guidance to the tourism sector on the provision of accessible channels and formats to display and facilitate accurate and regularly updated tourist information in destinations. The Recommendations cover accessible print materials, websites, digital media, apps, info screens and interface terminals widely used in the tourism sector.

15. During the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, in 2017, the Committee undertook the revision of the document entitled “Tips for a responsible traveller”. Addressed to tourists and travellers, the document highlights the principles of the Code of Ethics directly related to tourists and provides basic guidance on respecting common heritage, protecting the environment, supporting the local economy and, in sum, being an informed and respectful traveller, in line with the UNWTO campaign “Travel. Enjoy. Respect.”<sup>4</sup> During the first half of 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the document was revised to include updated recommendations<sup>5</sup> relevant to ensuring safe and secure travel.

16. In addition, the Committee issued the Recommendations on the Responsible Use of Ratings and Reviews on Digital Platforms,<sup>6</sup> developed in collaboration with Yelp, TripAdvisor and Minube, as an output of the research carried out on the topic of ratings on travel portals and their impact on the reputation of companies and destinations. The Recommendations were developed with a view to encouraging the responsible use of ratings and reviews on digital platforms related to the tourism sector and are addressed to three main stakeholders: digital platforms (operators); service providers (businesses listed on the platforms); and users (consumers) directly involved in selling and/or purchasing tourism services.

17. The Recommendations were approved in 2017 by the UNWTO General Assembly in its resolution 705(XXII). The Committee members participated on a regular basis in international debates on the topic with a threefold purpose: to promote the recommendations at the national and international levels; to verify whether the scope of the recommendations is still adequate; and to propose modifications where necessary.

<sup>4</sup> See [www.tourism4development2017.org/travel-enjoy-respect/](http://www.tourism4development2017.org/travel-enjoy-respect/).

<sup>5</sup> See <https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-07/Tips-for-Responsible-Traveller-WCTE-EN.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2019-12/wcterecommendationsratingsandreviewsenweb.pdf>.

18. A valuable set of guidelines advocated by the Committee is the Recommendations on Sustainable Development of Indigenous Tourism.<sup>7</sup> The Recommendations, originally prepared by the UNWTO secretariat after several rounds of consultations with indigenous tourism associations, indigenous entrepreneurs and advocates, were enhanced and validated by the Committee and adopted in 2019 by the UNWTO General Assembly in its resolution 723(XXIII). The rationale for the Recommendations rests on the harmonizing role that tourism has proved to play in indigenous communities, providing in many cases decent job opportunities, alleviating poverty and empowering women and young people. The Recommendations contain both general considerations on key aspects in indigenous tourism that concern all stakeholders and specific recommendations addressing the four main groups of stakeholders directly involved in tourism operations on the ground, namely tour operators and travel agencies, tour guides, the indigenous communities and tourists.

#### **D. Statement of the Committee on COVID-19 and tourism**

19. The Committee met remotely on 5 June 2020 for a special session on COVID-19 and tourism and issued a statement<sup>8</sup> underlining the need to abide by ethical principles when applying the necessary measures for supporting a post-COVID-19 tourism recovery. The said principles should be in line, in particular, with those in the Code of Ethics and the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics and cover various issues, namely non-discrimination and equity, accessibility, tourist and consumer protection, protection of data privacy, protection of the right to an informed decision and workers' rights and social protection.

#### **E. Twentieth anniversary of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**

20. The year 2019 marked the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Code of Ethics. As the Committee plays a fundamental role in promoting and safeguarding the principles of the Code, the Chair decided to celebrate this milestone by showcasing a collection of good practices in responsible tourism.

21. In order to undertake this initiative, the UNWTO secretariat has prepared an e-booklet<sup>9</sup> with examples from the tourism sector, each of them linked to one of the articles or sub-articles of the Code of Ethics. These illustrations stem from good practices collected from those companies and associations that have subscribed to the Private Sector Commitment to the Code or have submitted applications for the UNWTO Awards and/or the Ethics Awards.

### **III. Adoption of the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics**

22. In order to reinforce its effectiveness, the Committee agreed to transform the Code of Ethics into a legally binding treaty and asked the UNWTO Legal Adviser to prepare and introduce a draft text to that effect.

23. Stemming from the need for balance between safeguarding what has been achieved with the Code of Ethics and moving forward and enhancing its efficiency and the implementation of its principles, a draft convention was presented for consideration at the twenty-first session of the UNWTO General Assembly, in September 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Available at [www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284421299](http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284421299).

<sup>8</sup> Available at [www.unwto.org/tourism-ethics-a-special-session-on-covid-19-and-tourism](http://www.unwto.org/tourism-ethics-a-special-session-on-covid-19-and-tourism).

<sup>9</sup> Available at [https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-01/23WCTE\\_Item%205\\_Global%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20for%20Tourism-Anniversary.pdf](https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-01/23WCTE_Item%205_Global%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20for%20Tourism-Anniversary.pdf).

24. Subsequently, in accordance with UNWTO General Assembly resolution 668(XXI), the UNWTO Secretary-General was entrusted with establishing a special working group that, in cooperation with the Committee, examined in depth the procedures and implications of adopting a draft UNWTO convention on tourism ethics based on the Code of Ethics.

25. The working group, composed of representatives of 36 UNWTO member States, 3 associate members and 1 permanent observer, held five meetings since its creation at the beginning of 2016.<sup>10</sup> During the meetings, the draft text, now entitled the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics, was thoroughly reviewed article by article.

26. The Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics has been built around the nine core principles of the Code of Ethics. In order to frame the principles in the structure of an international treaty, several provisions have been adapted. The structure comprises five parts, in addition to the preamble. Articles 1 to 3 (part I) include the general provisions, which outline key terminology, aim and scope of provisions, as well as means of implementation. Articles 4 to 12 (part II) are the backbone of the Convention, dedicated to the ethical principles in tourism. Articles 13 to 15 (part III) refer to the mandate, composition and functioning of the Ethics Committee in the context of the Convention. The two final sections of the Convention contain standard provisions of international treaties: part IV (arts. 16–17) addresses the Conference of States Parties, and part V (arts. 18–26) features the final provisions regulating procedures for signature, ratification, acceptance, approval and accession.

27. As part of its deliberations, the working group agreed not to make substantial changes to the nine core principles of the Code of Ethics, as they were already accepted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 1999 and are widely known by the international tourism community. The nine articles were reproduced in the draft convention under the section “Ethical principles in tourism” and constitute the backbone of the Convention.

28. At the 105th session of the UNWTO Executive Council, held in Madrid in May 2017, the Council, in its decision CE/DEC/7(CV), endorsed the approach of avoiding any unnecessary changes to the nine core principles of the Code of Ethics, with the finalized draft text of the Convention to be submitted at the next session of the UNWTO General Assembly for its consideration.

29. At its twenty-second session, held in 2017, the UNWTO General Assembly established an ad hoc committee to review the recommendations of the working group and present the final text of the Convention and its Optional Protocol in English at the same session of the Assembly. The Assembly approved the English text of the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics by its resolution 707(XXII).

30. During the following year, the UNWTO secretariat translated the text of the Convention and its Optional Protocol into the other four official languages of UNWTO (Arabic, French, Spanish and Russian) and subsequently circulated the language versions to the UNWTO member States for comments and validation.

31. In September 2019, the Framework Convention, along with its Optional Protocol, was officially adopted in all five official languages of UNWTO by the UNWTO General Assembly at its twenty-third session, by its resolution 722(XXIII). This is the first international legally binding treaty adopted by UNWTO to regulate matters within its field of expertise.

32. The following member States have expressed their reservations concerning some provisions of the Convention and its Optional Protocol: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Japan, Malta, North Macedonia, Serbia,

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<sup>10</sup> For more information, see [www.unwto.org/ad-hoc-committee-and-working-group](http://www.unwto.org/ad-hoc-committee-and-working-group).

Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland, as well as associate member Flanders (Belgium). The letter containing the reservations is annexed to the resolution.<sup>11</sup>

33. The UNWTO General Assembly encouraged member States to take subsequent legal steps to express their consent to be bound by the Convention at the international level. Between 16 October 2019 and 15 October 2020, all States Members of the United Nations and members of UNWTO may sign the Convention at the headquarters of UNWTO, in Madrid (art. 18 of the Convention). After the aforementioned period, States may ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Convention. The Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day following the date of deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession (art. 20).

34. After its entry into force, the Framework Convention will coexist with the Code of Ethics. The States that ratify the Convention will formulate policies that are consistent with the principles included therein, encourage tourism enterprises and bodies to reflect those principles in their contractual instruments and periodically submit a report to the Committee concerning their compliance with these obligations. The Optional Protocol is a separate instrument that States parties to the Convention can decide to ratify; it consists of a voluntary conciliation mechanism concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention.

35. The voluntary implementation mechanism under the Code of Ethics will remain in place for those countries that will not ratify the Convention, as well as for the entities that have subscribed to the Private Sector Commitment to the Code, which is addressed exclusively to tourism companies and trade associations. In those two cases, the reporting mechanism through the Committee will remain applicable.

#### **IV. Implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism by the private sector**

36. Over the decades, tourism has been experiencing continuous growth and a deepening diversification to become one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. With this growth, the dominance of the corporate business interest in tourism must not exceed its ethical and responsible duty. As in times of growth, tourism stakeholders in the private sector play, in times of crisis, a significant role towards their society, community and workers, as has been seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby the actions of a number of tourism stakeholders are contributing to a significant part of the solution.

37. In order to foster transparency and stimulate responsible actions among tourism stakeholders in the private sector, in 2011 UNWTO launched the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics. This Commitment represents a public declaration on the part of a private tourism enterprise or association to uphold and integrate the principles of the Code in its corporate governance. As a manifestation of that public declaration, a signing ceremony is organized in the presence of the Secretary-General of UNWTO or the Chair of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics and national tourism representatives.

38. The Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics is open for signature to all private sector tourism companies (hotels and similar accommodation establishments, airline, cruise and rail companies, tour operators and travel agencies, convention centres, global distribution systems and online booking systems) and trade associations directly related to the aforementioned tourism companies. By signing the

<sup>11</sup> See [https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2019-10/a23\\_resolutions\\_en.pdf](https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2019-10/a23_resolutions_en.pdf).

Commitment to the Code, the signatories pledge to uphold, promote and implement the values of responsible and sustainable tourism development championed in the Code and to report to the Committee on their implementation of those principles.

39. As an impartial and autonomous body, the Committee monitors the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics and interprets the information obtained from the reports of the companies and associations. In that respect, the Committee plays a crucial role in acknowledging significant actions in terms of corporate social responsibility that are already in effect and, at the same time, determining major gaps that need increased attention in five selected areas, namely corporate governance and business ethics; employment quality; social equity and human rights; community well-being; and environmental sustainability. Exceptionally, in April 2020, an additional survey questionnaire was sent to the signatories seeking information on the measures taken to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on employees, on the community and at the government level.

40. The monitoring of implementation actions by companies and associations is carried out by means of a self-evaluating questionnaire, which is to be submitted every two years to the Committee. When no report is received from the signatories within a reasonable time frame, the entities in question are considered for suspension.

41. On December 2018, 130 signatories to the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics were suspended by the Committee after having failed to comply with the requirement to report on their implementation actions following the receipt of two formal reminders.

42. Taking into account the suspensions and the recent signatories, as at 30 June 2020 the total number of active private sector signatories to the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics amounted to 450 from 69 countries (see the table below).

#### **Signatories and responses to the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics, 30 June 2020**

Total number of signatories (since the beginning of the campaign in 2011)	580
Total number of signatories (after suspension)	450
Total number of responses between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2020	414
From companies	263
From associations	151

### **A. Implementation by companies**

43. UNWTO received 263 responses from companies during the period between July 2015 and June 2020. The respondents have reported at least once in the above-mentioned period since the issuance of the previous report in 2015.

44. With regard to the promotion of the Code of Ethics, companies indicated that they had disseminated the Code mainly to their staff members (100 per cent), clients (67 per cent), business partners (49 per cent), shareholders (42 per cent) and local community (35 per cent). In addition, 78 per cent of respondents had linked the Code to their corporate website and portals.

45. Of the five areas of corporate social responsibility mentioned previously, the ratio of interest reported by the surveyed companies was balanced. As for concrete examples, most good practices and innovative efforts were displayed in the areas of community well-being and environmental sustainability, while fewer examples were reported on employment quality, social equity and corporate governance.

46. With regard to community well-being, several companies reported having supported local populations in many ways, including humanitarian assistance for tsunami victims (Theme Resorts and Spas, Sri Lanka) and organizing donations of clothing and other supplies to local schools (Mövenpick Hotel Doha). Another notable example was reported by the Rajah Travel Corporation (Philippines), which coordinates the annual commemoration of Filipino and American veterans of the Second World War to shed light on lost histories. This initiative is also included in their touristic circuit. The Spanish airline company Iberia and Envera, a non-profit organization of Iberia employees who are parents of persons with disabilities, joined efforts to provide jobs for 400 persons with disabilities per year. In the Philippines, El Nido Resorts launched an initiative that allows guests to interact with the local fisherfolk and learn about them. This initiative is aimed not only at providing additional economic income to the locals but also at increasing awareness among tourists of the need to protect Bacuit Bay.

47. Another trend that appeared in the surveys was the clear focus on education and professional training for community support. Each hotel of Jetwing (Sri Lanka), for example, has adopted two foster schools in the surrounding region, where educational and environmental programmes are carried out on a regular basis. The company also offers an incentive to school-leavers from disadvantaged families so that they can be taught a professional skill. To a similar extent, the Bali Tourism Development Corporation (Indonesia) organizes workshops on sustainable fishing for the local beach community in their coastal conservation area. Club Med partnered with the international non-governmental organization Agrisud to support 336 very small businesses to improve their production and fill the gap between the supply and demand, resulting in €715,000 in financial support and nearly 182 tons of products delivered. The partnership was awarded by UNWTO for its effective contribution to the 2030 Agenda.

48. The area of environmental sustainability was rich with examples: some companies undertake serious attempts to reduce the volume of their waste. The Spanish hiking operator Itinerantur, for instance, provides its travellers with extensive recommendations on waste minimization and encourages them to keep the hiking routes as clean as possible. For its part, the Philippine tour operator Tradewings enforces a strict prohibition of plastic and equips its clients and personnel with reusable utensils, tote bags and the like. In addition, the Mexican Palace Resort launched a special programme for the protection and conservation of sea turtles. The Costa Rican tour operator Rios Tropicales successfully purchased 2,470 acres of rainforest land. The land is being reforested with 30,963 native species trees and protected from logging and illegal hunting. Reforestation efforts continue with the Serbian tourist service provider My Exit Adventure, with the development of the Green Revolution initiative, which mobilizes the public and initiates mass reforestation in Serbia. Furthermore, Jordan Marriott Hotels reported that they are fully powered by solar energy plants with an investment of \$17,655,367 covering 405,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

49. In terms of employment quality, a considerable number of companies tend to improve standard labour arrangements, such as increasing annual leave, closing the gender pay gap and offering more fixed-term contracts. However, only a few companies have gone beyond these efforts. One example is Terme Olimia in Slovenia, where employees can benefit from daily anti-stress rituals, mindfulness, movement exercises, free swimming, and fitness. Another reference to safeguarding the mental well-being of personnel was made by the Japanese entities KNT-CT Holdings and Nishimuraya Corporation. The latter has developed software to ensure that their employees are not overworking and are able to take their holidays even during the busy period.

50. As far as corporate governance is concerned, only a few companies reported innovative practices. One of them was the Brazilian non-profit private institution

Serviço Social do Comércio, which coordinates a monthly debate cycle for its partners on ethics in tourism, addressing issues such as gender equality and post-conflict environments. Another example stems from the Spanish digital platform Minube, which shares information with its stakeholders throughout its Minube School platform on human rights, accessibility and social inclusion, among other topics. Finally, the Philippine tour operator Tradewings urges not only its stakeholders but also its clients in a direct way to act responsibly when engaging in tourism.

51. Within the fifth category, social equity, three examples of interest come from Latin America: while the National Chamber of Tourism of Honduras has developed its own code against child labour in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund, Destinos y Representaciones Internacionales (Costa Rica) assists homeless people and sex workers towards self-determination through its foundation, and the Chilean hotel chain Andina del Sud supports local indigenous communities and the conservation of their culture and traditions in several ways through long-term partnerships. A great sense of respect for local practices is also reported by the Bali Tourism Development Corporation (Indonesia), which has a religious area preserved for locals to perform rituals without any restrictions.

52. For most of the respondents, signing the Private Sector Commitment and being committed to the principles of the Code of Ethics served as a benchmark for their day-to-day activities and strategic plans.

## **B. Implementation by trade associations**

53. UNWTO has acknowledged receipt of surveys from 151 associations for the period between September 2015 and April 2020. The associations have reported at least once in the above-mentioned period.

54. With regard to the promotion of the Code of Ethics, participating associations indicated that they had disseminated the Code mainly to their members (94 per cent), staff (51 per cent), providers (24 per cent) and external partners (21 per cent). Moreover, 73 per cent of the participating associations reported that they had linked the Code to their corporate website and portals. The Dutch Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (ANVR) took a step forward in the promotion of the Code and set adherence to it as a requirement for any potential member interested in joining the Association.

55. Much like the company-focused survey, the questionnaire that was sent to the associations focused on concrete corporate social responsibility practices in the same five areas of interest mentioned previously. However, fewer good practices were identified in the associations' responses, and most examples belonged to the areas of community well-being, social equity and environment. Concrete instances regarding employment quality and corporate governance were less present.

56. With regard to community well-being, some of the associations have put considerable effort into creating job opportunities, for instance in the Middle East. While the Syndicate of Owners of Restaurants, Cafes, Nightclubs and Pastries in Lebanon organizes workshops throughout the year to tackle local unemployment, the Egyptian Tourism Federation has created training and skills programmes for leather handicrafts, carpets, brass and embroidery, with a specific focus on local women. A further initiative is found in Sweden, where the employer organization Visita collaborates with the Government to solidify the skills of refugees and offer them jobs in the tourism sector.

57. On the environment, some of the associations enshrine their concrete measures in guidelines for their associates. The Portuguese association for nature tourism Rota

Vicentina, for instance, specifically targets intensive farming, as well as oil exploration and prospecting, by sending manifestos to the central Government. Another example is the Swedish hospitality organization Visita, which has published a handbook for its associates on how to manage tourism in a sustainable way. The Dutch Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators is strongly committed to biodiversity and endangered species protection and has been internationally recognized for those efforts. In the Middle East, the Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association launched Himmeh w Lammeh, an initiative that led to a collaboration between national and private entities in the tourism sector. The initiative was aimed at increasing awareness of littering and its negative impact on the environment through research on the topic (the methodology of which was designed in line with the Code's principles) and facilitating volunteering activities for a cleaner Jordan.

58. The social equity category was addressed widely, for which two concrete measures are worthy of mention: one is the European hospitality organization HOTREC, which is a key participant of the App Tour You project, aimed at small businesses to improve their accessibility. It is innovative as a digital tool that can be used by any stakeholder in a low-threshold manner. The other is the Israel Association of Travel Agencies and Consultants, which cooperates with both the Israeli Parliament and a local academic institution with the aim of exposing human trafficking and gender inequalities, which may be covered by tourism.

59. Concerning employment quality, the Japan Hotel Association emphasizes gender equality among its employees, having coordinated the Hotel Women's Forum. In the light of this event, a special workshop had been created in which female specialists working in management positions were invited to share their views. Furthermore, the Argentinian association AOCA, which organizes expositions and congresses, among others, collaborates closely with Teatro Ciego. The company specializes in blind theatrical experiences, and more than 40 per cent of its personnel are blind or have another visual impairment.

60. As for the fifth area of interest, corporate governance, good practices were scarce. Two good illustrations stem from the Japan Hotel Association and the European hospitality organization HOTREC, two associations that also score well in the other fields. While the former has published and disseminated guidelines on a number of issues (e.g. pandemic influenza, information protection, drunk driving), the latter reports taking part in several supranational initiatives, such as the Hotelstars Union, the European Hospitality Quality Scheme and the European Alcohol and Health Forum.

61. Finally, various associations reported that the Code of Ethics played a significant role in widening their visions. For instance, according to the Chair of the Swedish company Svensk Turism AB, the national strategy for the Swedish tourism industry focuses on developing the tourism industry in a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable way, and the Code of Ethics is widening perspectives and recalling the global nature of tourism and the importance of working together for a sustainable future.

### **C. Outcome of the COVID-19 special survey among signatories of the Private Sector Commitment to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**

62. As the sector faces an unprecedented challenge, the Committee, through its Chair, Pascal Lamy, contacted the signatories of the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics in April 2020 for an additional brief questionnaire. The survey, while open for only 12 days owing to the urgency of the situation, sought information

on the measures taken by the entities to support the fight against COVID-19 and to mitigate its numerous negative socioeconomic impacts.

63. The questionnaire included items such as the level of impact of COVID-19 on entities and the measures taken to mitigate the impact on workers and communities and at the government level. The responses to the questionnaire revealed the actions taken by signatories of the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics (58 entities from 25 countries in total). The respondents belonged to five categories, namely accommodation (38 per cent), travel agencies/tour operators (34 per cent), tourism chambers/associations/federations (16 per cent), other tourism services (7 per cent) and transportation (5 per cent). The COVID-19 outbreak had a strong, direct impact on 60 per cent of the participating entities, which reported that they had to temporarily shut down the business. As for the rest, 35 per cent were extremely affected, with a possibility of shutting down in the future, and only 5 per cent reported that the outbreak had a mild impact on them.

64. Moreover, the study revealed that, despite staff furloughs, employers across the sector are stepping up their support for workers and for communities. The survey found that many companies are providing 24-hour psychological services for their employees, maintaining medical insurance and facilitating the use of platforms containing motivational videos, medical updates and training. Many are also offering free lodging and food for stranded international staff and their families.

65. Monetary donations have been made to city councils, underprivileged families and rural communities, and food and supplies have been sent to front-line workers and vulnerable groups. Some chambers of commerce are working with public, real estate, financial and legal entities to provide small and medium-sized enterprises with funding and identify guarantors for those unable to get a loan. Associations have joined local pandemic committees to flag the most pressing issues and better articulate their support.

66. Hotels donated thousands of room nights to medical staff for their holidays and remained open for them and COVID-19 patients whenever necessary. Guides offered virtual tours for voluntary contributions donated to hospitals, and transportation companies offered their modes of transportation to bring critical emergency equipment to save lives. Volunteer platforms were set up to create youth loans. Virtual solidarity groups gathered hundreds of travel agents with various jobs to exchange goods and support their livelihoods.

67. Some good examples of concrete campaigns were presented by various signatories. In the category of accommodation, the Costa Rican Westin Reserva Hotels set up a network with local social welfare organizations to support vulnerable families through the donation of food and hygiene products. It turned the cessation of the hotel's operation into an opportunity for in-kind donation of the supplies from the hotel's general store. In addition, Melia Hotel in Spain sent its food and hygiene product donations to hospitals, non-governmental organizations and social entities and the Administration. Part of Melia's solidarity campaign targeted health-care professionals currently fighting COVID-19 by offering 20,000 room nights.

68. The Spanish transportation entity Renfe is a good example for responsible actions taken during the pandemic. It offered a free high-speed, long-distance service for medical staff pursuant to their request; the services were also used for the transportation of necessary medical equipment, such as respirator prototypes and medications. The trains were adapted for the transfer of patients between the Autonomous Communities of Spain. Renfe joined efforts with other organizations in the "Hay Luz al Final del Túnel" (there is light at the end of the tunnel) campaign (#HayLuzAlFinalDelTunel), which is aimed at spreading positive news in the current hard times. In addition, understanding the challenging times faced by the tourism

sector, Renfe suspended the collection of rent for 20 locomotives and 200 wagons of private companies.

69. Finally, the participating associations played a significant role in liaising between their Governments and members. Many associations provided legal and financial advice to their members and liaised with the authorities to relay their members' needs. A good practice was established by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, which currently works with banks to make their resources, as well as those of 365 chambers, available to its members. The Union is about to launch a support loan for small and medium-sized enterprises whereby parties from the public, real estate and financial sectors provide such enterprises with quality financing support services. The Union will be working in cooperation with the Credit Guarantee Fund, an affiliate organization of the Union that will act as guarantor for small and medium-sized enterprises and other enterprises that are unable to get a loan owing to insufficient collateral. In addition, representatives from the Union have been invited to meetings of the local pandemic committee, which is especially important for delivering members' demands.

## V. Other UNWTO activities in line with the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

### A. Women in tourism

70. The landmark *Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010*<sup>12</sup> was the first study of its kind to map the participation of women in the tourism sector worldwide. The report presented a detailed picture that focused on five main areas: employment, entrepreneurship, leadership, education and community. In 2017, UNWTO joined forces with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank Group and Amadeus to compile the second edition of the *Global Report on Women in Tourism*,<sup>13</sup> which studies the changes of the preceding decade and illustrates tourism's contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5.

71. Published in 2019, the second edition of the report pinpoints challenges and identifies ways to mitigate gender inequality and empower all women within the tourism sector. Key regional trends are outlined with an in-depth analysis of four regions, an extensive analysis of four key branches of the tourism sector and a strengthened qualitative dimension including a literature review, field research, interviews and a rich tapestry of in-depth case studies from across the globe. In the second edition of the report, developments in technology and digital platforms are also explored from a gender perspective.

72. The report is accompanied by an action plan,<sup>14</sup> which is grounded in the key findings and provides clear guidance and specific steps that allow stakeholders to translate the findings of the report into concrete actions. Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mali and South Africa have since adopted the action plan, and the Ministerial Declaration<sup>15</sup> adopted at the 2019 Group of 20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting contains many of its recommendations.

<sup>12</sup> UNWTO and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010* (Madrid, UNWTO, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> UNWTO, *Global Report on Women in Tourism*, 2nd ed. (Madrid, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Available at [www.e-unwto.org/pb-assets/unwto/191121\\_action\\_plan\\_women\\_in\\_tourism\\_2nd\\_ed.pdf](http://www.e-unwto.org/pb-assets/unwto/191121_action_plan_women_in_tourism_2nd_ed.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Available at [www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/en/page07\\_000019.html](http://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/en/page07_000019.html).

73. UNWTO is currently working to launch a programme that will support States, the private sector and civil society in the implementation of the action plan. The Equality and Empowerment Programme aims to see 20 UNWTO member States, 20 businesses and 10 non-governmental organizations implement gender equality strategies that will improve the situation for women in tourism and further boost the sector's empowerment potential.

## **B. Recommendations for an inclusive response to COVID-19 aimed at supporting vulnerable groups**

74. In collaboration with relevant international, national and local partners, UNWTO has developed a set of recommendations<sup>16</sup> to help Governments and tourism businesses to craft an inclusive response to COVID-19 that ensures that vulnerable groups are not left behind. The recommendations were designed to fully embrace the five vulnerable groups.

75. **Women.** As tourism is a sector with a majority female workforce worldwide (54 per cent) and most women are in low-skilled or informal work, women are the fastest and hardest hit by the economic shock to tourism caused by COVID-19. Women must therefore be included in immediate mitigation measures.

76. **Persons with disabilities and older persons.** Persons with disabilities and older persons are heavily affected by COVID-19. They are often excluded from communications on public health and travel updates, decision-making and information on accessibility of basic services. Their health conditions and social isolation can expose them to serious risks. The pandemic, coinciding with the off season in many destinations, also caught many people with access requirements travelling or "about to board".

77. **Indigenous peoples.** The cultural expressions of indigenous peoples are among the most distinctive features of tourism destinations, making them key players within the sector. Despite their global relevance, indigenous peoples have historically been among the most marginalized population groups. As the pandemic has a heavy impact on the tourism industry, those disadvantaged indigenous communities will be affected first and most severely.

78. **Youth.** The COVID-19 pandemic has put young people in the spotlight, particularly given the potential social and economic consequences for this demographic, in both emerging and mature destinations. As a sector, tourism is labour-intensive, and young people are a dominant part of the workforce. At the same time, young travellers are a big market and how they travel has long shaped the sector and will have a huge influence on its future.

## **C. Accessible Tourism Destination**

79. The UNWTO General Assembly, in 2019, served as the platform for announcing the awardees of the first international Accessible Tourism Destination distinction, launched by UNWTO in partnership with the ONCE Foundation. The distinction is aimed at recognizing and promoting accessible tourism destinations that make substantial efforts to be enjoyed by any tourist regardless of physical, sensory or cognitive abilities. The distinction is not an accessible destination certification, but rather highlights the initiatives undertaken so far, as well as the efforts to maintain and increase the level of accessibility. On the occasion of the first Accessible Tourism

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<sup>16</sup> Available at [www.unwto.org/covid-19-inclusive-response-vulnerable-groups](http://www.unwto.org/covid-19-inclusive-response-vulnerable-groups).

Destination awards ceremony, held at the 2020 International Tourism Trade Fair in Madrid, Turismo de Portugal was conferred the principal Accessible Tourism Destination 2019 recognition, while the destination management organizations of the cities of Barcelona (Spain) and Thrissur, Kerala (India) were awarded special mentions in the categories of urban destinations and emerging destinations, respectively, for making their destinations more accessible to all.

80. The celebration of World Tourism Day 2016 on the theme “Tourism for all – promoting universal accessibility” came at an encouraging time for international tourism as more political and the tourism industry decision makers had started advocating tourism for all. The main celebrations and key events were hosted in Bangkok by the Government of Thailand and were followed by hundreds of parallel events worldwide. This was the first time that UNWTO dedicated World Tourism Day to this topic, representing an important milestone in awareness-raising on universal accessibility and its wide-ranging benefits.

## **VI. Conclusion**

81. Since the adoption of the Code of Ethics in 1999 by the UNWTO General Assembly, UNWTO, through its programme of work and the Committee, has actively promoted the Code’s nine principles for the achievement of sustainable, responsible and accessible tourism development. A significant decision in the promotion of the Code’s principles was the adoption of the first international convention on tourism, the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics, which was built around the nine core principles of the Code. This is considered a major step towards a more substantive improvement in the practical application of the principles. The Committee is advocating for States to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

82. Much of the work of UNWTO has been directly and indirectly linked to the Code of Ethics. Such issues as technology and digital platforms in tourism, overtourism and its impact on host communities, decent work and inclusive growth, gender equality and socioeconomic empowerment, indigenous tourism, accessible destinations, respect for intangible cultural heritage, child protection, and the rights of workers in tourism were all reviewed by the Committee in the past five years, in addition to the topic of post-COVID-19 tourism.

83. At present, the globe is faced with a pandemic affecting every level of society and every stakeholder of the tourism sector. Underscoring the importance of international collaboration, UNWTO is working with international organizations and Governments, as well as the private sector, to further inclusive responses to COVID-19 in these difficult times. The signatories of the Private Sector Commitment to the Code of Ethics submitted an additional report on the measures that they had taken to mitigate the effects of the crisis in a manner responsible to their communities and employers. UNWTO, through the Committee, stimulates the efforts of the reporting signatories and their responsible initiatives and encourages new tourism enterprises and trade associations around the world to adhere to the Private Sector Commitment to the Code and to conduct more responsible business operations and practices.

84. While much work remains to be done, the Code of Ethics continues to serve as a reference – in times of crisis and recovery – for all the parties involved in the tourism value cycle to achieve sustainable tourism development. With the adoption of the Framework Convention, the Code of Ethics will coexist and will always function through the Committee, which will continue to report to both the UNWTO General Assembly and the United Nations General Assembly.