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Ressort: Reise & Tourismus

Harmonizing travel and health protocols

Rome, 09.04.2021 [ENA]

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has again convoked its Global Tourism Crisis Committee on 9th April 2021 to lead the sector in harmonizing travel and health protocols and securing crucial financing for businesses striving to survive an historic crisis. The ninth meeting of the Crisis Committee advanced solutions to the biggest challenges standing in the way of international travel returning.

The Committee

is composed of members drawn from political leadership, international organizations, including UNWTO's sister UN agencies, finance and the private sector. They discussed the Crisis Committee's Recommendations, which focus on four core areas: the reopening of safe, cross-border travel; promoting safe travel at all points of the tourist journey; providing liquidity to tourism businesses and protecting jobs, and restoring confidence in travel.

The virtual meeting was co-hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Opening the proceedings, the Minister for Tourism, His Excellency Ahmad bin Aqil Al Kateeb, said: "Saudi Arabia has been collaborating with partners across the public and private sectors both regionally and globally to accelerate

the resumption of international travel. The facilitation of safe and seamless travel is the only way to restore confidence among travelers and tourism businesses, which will ultimately be the drivers of the sector's recovery."

The Committee backed the proposed EU Digital Green Pass as an example of joined-up protocols for other regions to follow. Addressing the meeting, EU Vice President Margaritis Schinas said that "we can make summer 2021 the beginning of the post-pandemic era, one that is safer, more sustainable, more resilient and more prosperous". He stressed that "the tourism sector can – and should - be at the forefront of this effort, leading the recovery of the European and the global economy".

Mr. Schinas also outlined the work being done to raise consumer confidence in tourism, already devastated by issues surrounding cancelling and refunding travel services and noted: "UNWTO's efforts to develop an International Code for the Protection of Tourists are most welcome". The landmark legal code is one of several key UNWTO initiatives aimed at restoring confidence in international travel.

Through the Global Tourism Crisis Committee, UNWTO also advanced on its work addressing one of the other key challenges facing global tourism, namely the sudden halt of tourism cash flow and the need to

Redaktioneller Programmdienst: European News Agency

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support businesses and protect jobs.

Along with ICAO and the WHO, UNWTO is one of the only UN agencies working with the OECD on its International Mobility Initiative. UNWTO is also working closely with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

OECD and EBRD again contributed to the latest meeting of the Crisis Committee, advancing coordinated efforts to both support tourism businesses through the current crisis and also to build future resilience and achieve greater sustainability, including through promoting green investments in the sector. Also updating the Committee were the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), with their representatives focusing in particular on the potential role of innovation, green

investments in tourism and on supporting businesses, now and during the recovery phase.

Also at the Committee, UNWTO and IATA (the International Air Transport Association) announced the imminent launch of a new Destination Tracker. This tool will be available on the websites of both organizations and provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on the restrictions and requirements of airlines and destinations, allowing tourists to make informed choices.

The Recommendations of the UNWTO Global Tourism Crisis Committee emphasize the importance of grounding policies on current international health and aviation regulations, including but not limited to provisions from the World Health Organization (WHO) and those the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO), most notably its 'Take Off' guidance and the work of its Civil Aviation Recovery Taskforce (CART).

The Recommendations also call for the creation of Public Health Corridors, the implementation of digital health solutions and the development of a common "traffic-light" system as a recognizable risk management framework. In presenting the Recommendations, the Minister of Tourism of Greece and Chair of the UNWTO Crisis Committee's Technical Group, Harry Theoharis, said that "this year we have more tools in our arsenal, including vaccinations, to address all concerns of travellers and people employed in the tourism sector."

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https://www.european-news-agency.de/reise_tourismus/harmonizing_travel_and_health_protocols-81013/

Redaktion und Verantwortlichkeit:

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