

World Tourism Organization

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The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations' specialized agency, responsible for the promotion of sustainable, responsible, and universally accessible tourism. As the leading international and the only intergovernmental organization in this field, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive ► [development](#), and environmental sustainability. It supports the advancement of tourism practice, policy, and ► [knowledge](#) worldwide by generating market knowledge, promoting competitive and ► [sustainable tourism](#) policies and instruments, and fostering tourism ► [education](#) and ► [training](#) for its members. It also provides the world's most comprehensive collection of tourism-related ► [statistics](#), including the regularly issued UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, aimed at monitoring the short-term evolution of ► [international tourism](#) flows (UNWTO [n.d.](#)). Its membership includes 156 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers, and over 400 affiliate members, the latter representing the private sector, educational institutions, trade associations, and local tourism authorities.

UNWTO originated as the International Union of Official Travel Organizations, which was renamed the World Tourism Organization during its first General Assembly held in Madrid in 1975. In 2003 this intergovernmental organization became a specialized agency of the United Nations; in 2005 UNWTO was officially adopted as the organization's abbreviation.

UNWTO comprises five major bodies, which govern its financial and administrative activities: the General Assembly, the Executive Council, the Regional Commissions, the Committees, and the Secretariat. The General Assembly meets every 2 years to approve budgets and programs and to debate on topics of vital importance to tourism. The Executive Council is its governing board, responsible for ensuring that this body carries out its ► [work](#) and adheres to its budget. It meets at least twice a year and is composed of members elected by the General Assembly. It has six Regional Commissions (► [Africa](#), the ► [Americas](#), East ► [Asia and the Pacific](#), ► [Europe](#), the ► [Middle East](#), and South Asia), which meet at least once a year (UNWTO 2012). Its Specialized Committees advise on ► [management](#) and program content. These include the Program and Budget Committee, the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, the Committee on Market and Competitiveness, Committee on Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account, the Sustainable Development of Tourism Committee, and the Committee for the Review of Applications for Affiliate Membership. The

Secretariat is led by the Secretary-General and is responsible for implementing UNWTO's program of work and serving the needs of its members.

UNWTO works in six main areas: Competitiveness, ► [sustainability](#), poverty reduction, capacity building, partnerships, and mainstreaming. The Organization aims to maximize the positive economic, social, and cultural effects of tourism, while minimizing its negative impacts. It encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO [n.d.](#)) and is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UNWTO [2014](#)).

See also ► [Collaboration and partnership](#), ► [organizations and associations](#), ► [policy](#), ► [statistics](#), ► [sustainable tourism](#).

References

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- UNWTO 2012 Statutes of the World Tourism Organization. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.
- UNWTO (n.d.) UNWTO World Tourism Barometer <<http://mkt.unwto.org/barometer>> (3 April 2014).
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