

# Encouraging Travel Facilitation and Connectivity in Asia Pacific



Travel facilitation, connectivity and the sustainable development of the tourism sector were at the center of UNWTO's 25th annual statutory meeting for Asia and the Pacific and its adjoining conference on sustainable tourism in Hyderabad, India from the 12-14 April.

The Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and UNWTO Commission for South Asia (CAP-CSA) are UNWTO's annual regional statutory events, and the largest, most important gathering of Member States from the region.

The focus on UNWTO priorities such as travel (visa) facilitation, intelligent taxation and air connectivity set the frame for the adjoining Sustainable Tourism Conference, hosted by the Ministry of Tourism of the Government of India in collaboration with the Government of Andhra Pradesh. At the opening, the Indian Minister State of Tourism, Dr. K. Chiranjeevi, emphasized the importance of intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation as a key to sustainable tourism development.

During the conference, countries shared their challenges and difficulties in developing sustainable tourism, including the call to increase tourism's contribution to poverty reduction, the need for long-term impact monitoring and the prioritization of tourism in national development policies.

Mr. Zoltan Somogyi, UNWTO Executive Director for Member Relations and Services, noted that UNWTO is committed to standing by its members to advance the sustainability agenda by generating know-how, disseminating information and continuing to work closely with countries in the region to identify the challenges, needs and opportunities for sustainable development and formulate and implement effective sustainable tourism development strategies.

The events gathered senior tourism executives from over 20 UNWTO Member States, who were joined by representatives of India's state governments, union territories and private stakeholders.

## **India accepts the Open Letter on Travel and Tourism**

Ahead of the Meetings in Hyderabad, UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai presented the Open Letter on Travel and Tourism to the Indian Vice President, Prof Dr Mohammad Hamid Ansari, in New Delhi.

The Open Letter, a joint initiative of UNWTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), is presented to heads of state and government around the world calling them to acknowledge tourism's key role in delivering more sustained and balanced growth and to prioritize the sector higher in national policies in order to maximize its potential.

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