

THE END OF THE WORLD TOURISM FORUM LUCERNE



Since 2008, the World Tourism Forum Lucerne (WTFL) has been a permanent fixture in the annual tourism calendar, and over the years has been able to welcome important personalities in its own, ever-expanding and modern formats. The interactive platform aimed to bring together CEOs, ministers, academics, financiers, start-ups and young talents to form a community that would address the future challenges of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. Unfortunately, this has now come to an end.

President and CEO Martin Barth announced, "with a heavy heart" that WTFL is ceasing its activities with immediate effect. Tourism and Switzerland are thus losing another important platform. The decision was made "after careful consideration and many intensive discussions," Barth said. The reason for the discontinuation is clear: **The worldwide pandemic has not spared the WTFL.**

"We fought hard over the past few months with the help of our partners and staff to save WTFL, but in the end, we had to face the facts: Our partners - big companies, destinations and countries - will have to deal with the effects of the crisis for a long time to come. That means they can't afford to keep funding WTFL, so we can no longer count on big-name partners and sponsors to provide us with the financial resources we need to keep our organization running." With immediate effect, WTFL AG will therefore cease to exist, so as not to incur any further operating costs.

Over the years, WTFL had organized meetings and dialogues on all continents and events, also attracted heads of state and tourism ministers from all over the world, and enjoyed a high reputation as a global think tank. Barth is particularly proud of the fact that 15,000 people had signed up to the World Tourism Forum global network, there was a collaboration with 40 partner schools on every continent, and 5000 start-ups were in touch with investors and the industry through a dedicated deal flow tool. Unfortunately, that wasn't enough to weather the huge downturn resulting from the pandemic.

But the painful step is also a kind of incentive for Barth: "A door is closing, but our mission is now more important than ever. [...] We will do everything in our power to preserve and maintain the values we have nurtured over the past 15 years because we are convinced that our main tasks will be more important than ever in a post-pandemic world."

Those main tasks, he said, are **global dialogue on the future of tourism, which will be especially important because of and after the pandemic and must be coordinated globally;** sharing ideas; collaborating and leveraging synergies across disciplines; working on future issues in exchange with young talent; and sustainable development and diversity in the tourism industry.

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