Tourism has the power to change the world for the better. The contribution of tourism in terms of generating employment (one in 10 jobs are now linked to the tourism sector), especially for women and youth, as well as its capacity to protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage is particularly valuable.

International tourist arrivals reached 1.4 billion in 2018 (a 6% increase on the previous year), positioning 2018 as the second best year in numbers since 2010. Total export earnings from international tourism reached USD 1.7 trillion in 2018, or almost USD 5 billion a day. International tourism (travel and passenger transport) accounts for 29% of the world’s services exports and 7% goods and services exports. For the seventh year in a row, growth in tourism exports (+4%) was higher than growth in merchandise exports (+3%) in 2018.

Tourism is a people-based sector that depends not only on professional skills but also on the interpersonal skills of the workforce for the delivery of the more and more diverse travel experiences expected by the traveler. It is also a major job and wealth creator for developed and developing countries - at different skills levels, for often marginalised sectors of society such as young people and women, and in areas where other opportunities are scarce.

It is for these reasons that tourism is widely acknowledged as a valuable tool for alleviating poverty. Employment within the sector can provide income and professional experience and therefore contribute to a person’s social inclusion and individual development. Tourism also contributes in a significant way to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of destinations, where local people are employed and trained and income flows directly to the local economy.

WHERE: local level (destination level) in all regions and countries

BENEFICIARIES: DMOs, Tourism Destinations, Private Sector Stakeholders and local economies (agri-food local producers, handmade local manufacturers, etc.) who can be included in the tourism value chain at national, regional and local level, Residents and local/indigenous communities, Tourists /Visitors

PARTNERS: UNWTO Academy

DURATION: 9-12 months

TOTAL COST: 25,000-30,000 EUR per DMO at local level (budget depends on the number of staff and the HDI of the country according to UNDP)

SDGs:
However, ensuring that destinations are effectively managed and able to maximize the benefits of tourism while at the same time minimizing the potential negative impacts of the sector, is an increasingly-pressing challenge, particularly given the shifting nature of the market, the fast pace of the tourism sector and the emergence of new players.

Among traditional marketing and promotion boards, the trend is for destination management organizations (DMOs) to become leading organizations with a broader mandate. This mandate incorporates strategic planning, coordination and the management of a full range of activities, all within an adequate governance structure that allows different stakeholders to contribute to the accomplishment of common goals.

Destinations where such a body has still be to established are increasingly either in the process of creating one or plan to create a DMO as they plan for the future.

UNWTO has significant experience of elaborating and disseminating knowledge in the field of tourism, providing technical expertise and assisting its members to enhance their institutional and governance capacities through tourism development. UNWTO.QUEST, with its unique methodology which includes assessment against a globally applicable framework of criteria and indicators (which in turn serves to measure the performance of a DMO) and its tailor-made improvement plan based on the specific needs of the DMO, has proven to be a useful tool for strengthening its institutional capacities. This way, destinations are better-placed to identify and overcome any weaknesses or institutional gaps. Among the many benefits, a DMO improves internal capacities and contributes to the development of human skills. It can also boost the efficiency of strategic leadership, aid execution and governance and lead to the incorporation of managerial skills which will help identify and engage local industries participating in the tourism value chain.

### Background

UNWTO, as the specialized UN agency responsible for promoting responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, has developed UNWTO.QUEST, a program designed to assist existing DMOs achieve their full potential. The initiative has been designed to be fully compliant with the SDGs and the Global Code for Ethics in Tourism. UNWTO.QUEST is aimed at Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) - mainly at regional and local level – and designed to reinforce their capacities and strengthen three key performance areas. These are: Strategic Leadership, Effective Execution and Efficient Governance. These key performance areas are the bottom line against which the majority of DMOs evaluate their strategic and operational activities, in destination management, and they are measured within the UNWTO.QUEST Programme. The program was endorsed by the 21st meeting of the General Assembly (A/RES/650(XXII)).

For each of these three key performance areas, UNWTO has developed a set of criteria and indicators within the UNWTO.QUEST methodology. These are globally applicable and serve to measure the performance of the DMO and identify possible gaps. Destinations where such an organization is still not in place are increasingly either creating or plan to create a destination management organization. The criteria and indicators developed by UNWTO also apply during the process of creating new DMOs.

As a result of the above, a DMO will be able to improve its daily performance levels, and this will contribute to enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination while creating a favorable framework for inclusive tourism growth. This will help catalyze the benefits both for the tourists as well as local businesses and the communities and residents of the destination.

UNWTO.QUEST offers a training component through the UNWTO Academy. This supports DMOs through an ongoing improvement process based on capacity building activities. Punta del Este Convention and Visitors Bureau (Uruguay) and Agencia Córdoba Turismo (Argentina) successfully achieved the criteria and standards and were awarded with the UNWTO.QUEST Certification in December 2018 and January 2019, respectively. Certification is valid for four years (with the possibility of renewal).

1. UNWTO.QUEST is a Programme addressed to Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) - mainly at regional and local level - whose aim is to reinforce their institutional capacities and strengthen three key performance areas in destination management: Strategic Leadership, Effective Execution and Efficient Governance. See more on UNWTO.QUEST in http://marketintelligence.unwto.org/content/unwtoquest.

In Punta del Este, for example, the training and capacity building provided by the UNWTO Academy has contributed to achieve an optimal management of the destination ensuring that the various authorities, all relevant stakeholders and professionals are coordinated by a leading entity under a coherent strategy and a collective vision in pursuit of a common goal, the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination. The participation of Punta del Este Convention and Visitors Bureau in UNWTO.QUEST has led to stronger governance. It has also led to better integration of all relevant tourism stakeholders (public – vertical and horizontal levels – and private sector) in the process of planning and managing the tourism destination. UNWTO.QUEST also helped this DMO obtain the credibility and trust of all stakeholders in the destination and beyond its boundaries, which was key to linking-up isolated and diverse elements for the improved planning and management of the destination.

**Overall Objective**

The overall objective is to assist destinations in creating a sustainable and responsible tourism sector that contributes to economic growth, socio-economic development, cultural and natural preservation and well-being for the local communities and visitors alike.

**Objectives**

- Provide a framework of standards and criteria to guide and assist DMO in destination management strategies
- Accompany DMOs in strengthening institutional and governance capacities
- Enhance competitiveness and sustainability of tourism destinations through the improvement of DMO strategic planning, management and governance
- Acknowledge DMO quality and excellence, by awarding the UNWTO.QUEST Certification

**Main Activities**

- Self-assessment (by the DMO) according to the set of criteria (23) and indicators (64) developed by UNWTO for DMOs
- Audit by an external auditor (online or onsite)
- Validation by UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board
- Design of a tailor-made improvement plan by UNWTO Academy with the DMO
- Implementation of the improvement plan by UNWTO Academy
- Final audit (onsite if the previous audit was online) by an external auditor
- Validation of final audit by UNWTO.QUEST Advisory Board
- Award UNWTO.QUEST Certification to DMO (if the DMO successfully meets at least 70% of the maximum score), valid for 4 years
- Renewal of the Certification

**Project Outputs**

- 5-10 people trained on 3 key performance areas at DMO level (strategic planning, effective execution and effective governance)
- Strategic plan (vision + actions) for the DMO on a short-term basis (3-5 years)
Tourism is a powerful vehicle to promote and reach the milestones of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development given that it is one of the most important sectors in the global economy and a main job and wealth creator for many countries. Tourism is now the third largest export category in the world, behind fuels and chemicals, and ahead of food and automotive. It provides 1 in 10 jobs and contributes to more than 10% of global GDP. In 2018 alone, international tourist arrivals amounted to 1.4 billion and generated US$ 1.5 trillion, while domestic tourism generated a further US$ 3.68 trillion.

But the sector doesn’t just play a role in economic growth; it is most remarkable for its potential to improve the quality of people’s lives. Truly sustainable tourism can act as a catalyst for environmental protection, champion diverse cultural heritage, and contribute to peace-building in the world. In all these areas, tourism offers great potential to advance sustainable development, and thus contributes – directly and indirectly – to the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

The World Tourism Organization has been providing technical assistance in countries across the globe for more than 40 years, supported by a wide range of donors, in partnerships with other IOs, Civil Society and the private sector. It has knowledge and expertise in the development of a sustainable, responsible and accessible tourism sector that contributes to a better world.

To scale up the efforts to unlock aid flows for tourism in the new 2030 aid architecture, UNWTO has developed a co-creation space in the T4SDGs platform for sharing developing countries’ needs.

For more information, contact UNWTO: Institutional Relations and Partnerships at sdg17@unwto.org

Please visit www.Tourism4SDGs.org