

**Executive Council**

124th session  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

8 November 2025

**Agenda item 3****Report on the Interinstitutional  
Working Group on Tourism and Climate Action  
and the Committee on Merit and Excellence**

CE/124/3  
Madrid, 8 October 2025  
Original: English

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**For information****Executive summary**

The present document provides new information relevant to the Interinstitutional Working Group on Tourism and Climate Action and the creation of a Committee on Merit and Excellence, as approved by the Executive Council at its 123rd session ([CE/DEC/12\(CXXIII\)](#)).

## I. Introduction

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1. Following decision [CE/DEC/12\(CXXIII\)](#) of the 123rd Executive Council, the Secretariat and Brazil have worked jointly to develop the final terms of reference for the establishment of the Interinstitutional Working Group on Tourism and Climate Action and Committee on Merit and Excellence proposed by Brazil in a letter received on 16 April 2025.
2. A copy of the terms of reference for the Interinstitutional Working Group on Tourism and Climate Action is attached to the present document as Annex I. The provisional terms of reference developed for the Committee on Merit and Excellence are attached to the present document as Annex II.

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## **Annex I: Terms of reference for the Interinstitutional Working Group on Tourism and Climate Action**

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### **1. Background and rationale**

Climate change poses one of the most significant threats to sustainable development, with the tourism sector both impacted by and contributing to global greenhouse gas emissions. Following the Azerbaijan COP29 Declaration on Enhanced Climate Action in Tourism and recognizing the urgent need for coordinated efforts to enhance climate action in tourism, Brazil proposes the creation of an Interinstitutional Working Group on Tourism and Climate Action. This initiative will strengthen partnerships, align strategies, and accelerate the implementation of climate-resilient and low-carbon tourism policies and practices.

The Interinstitutional Working Group on Tourism and Climate Action (hereinafter referred to as the “Working Group”) was established by the Executive Council through decision 12(CXXIII), adopted at its 123rd session on 31 May 2025.

### **2. Objective**

The Working Group shall propose, recommend, coordinate and assist the developing of concrete, actionable, and scalable strategies to address climate change in the tourism sector in accordance with the Budget and the Programme of Work of the Organization. Additionally, the Working Group shall act as a governance mechanism for the Global Partnership for Enhanced Climate Action in Tourism, reinforce the implementation of the Glasgow Declaration Initiative on Climate Action in Tourism and operate in coordination with the Committee on Tourism and Sustainability.

In particular, the Working Group shall prepare and submit to the Executive Council:

- a) A 2-year work plan for climate action in tourism, in support of global climate goals;
- b) Annual progress reports;
- c) Policy briefs and guidance documents for Member States and stakeholders, in accordance with the work plan;

The Working Group will contribute to major UN climate and tourism platforms focusing on climate action (e.g., UNFCCC COP, UNGA, UN Ocean Conference).

### **3. Scope of work**

The Working Group shall:

- a) Serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge, experiences, and best practices related to tourism and climate action, including both mitigation and adaptation;
- b) Support the implementation of the Glasgow Declaration Initiative on Climate Action in Tourism;
- c) Support the development of practical tools to advance climate action in tourism, for instance, GHG calculators, climate risk related tools, etc.;
- d) Identify barriers, opportunities, and financing mechanisms for climate-smart tourism policies and investments, including both mitigation and adaptation;
- e) Promote the integration of climate mitigation and adaptation measures into national and regional tourism strategies;
- f) Share and promote best practices and guiding information on data collection, monitoring, and reporting frameworks for tourism-related emissions;
- g) Support the collaboration among organizations such as UNEP and UNFCCC for advancing climate action in tourism;
- h) Issue recommendations on key elements that support advancing climate action in tourism by a variety of stakeholders; and
- i) Encourage innovation, digitalization, and capacity-building in climate-related tourism action.

#### **4. Composition**

Membership of the Working Group will be open to designated representatives of Full Members of the Organization. The composition of the Working Group will aim at ensuring the widest geographical representation.

The representatives of the Associate Members and the Affiliate Members in the Executive Council may participate in meetings of the Working Group as observers.

Organizations of the UN system, international financial institutions and development partners, the private sector, and academic and research institutions with expertise in tourism, climate science, and sustainability may be invited to participate in the discussions of the Working Group as observers to provide relevant input and expertise on the specific topics of discussion.

The Working Group will appoint a Chair and a Vice-Chair from among its Full Members to serve for two (2) years. The term of office of the Chair and Vice-Chair may be renewable.

The Chair will represent the Working Group before other organs, as appropriate.

#### **5. Governance and operations**

The Working Group will be subject to the authority of the Executive Council and report to it.

The Institutional Relations, Partnerships and Advocacy Department will serve as Secretariat of the Working Group under the supervision of the Office of the Executive Director.

The Working Group will meet at least twice a year, either in-person or virtually, without prejudice to the possibility of holding extraordinary meetings.

In cooperation with the Chair, the Secretariat will coordinate and assist in the organization and preparation of the agenda for the meetings of the Working Group, and any other support activities deemed necessary.

The working language of the Working Group will be English.

Meetings of the Working Group will be recorded.

The Working Group will take decisions by consensus among its members. Members of the Working Group will make every effort to reach a consensus that is generally accepted, so that a decision can be adopted without formal objections. In such cases, any dissenting positions or reservations will be placed on the record without constituting an impediment to the adoption of the decision in question.

Where it is not possible to reach consensus on a specific issue, the divergent views will be set out in the reports of the Working Group to the Executive Council.

#### **6. Timeline**

The Working Group will adopt its Work Plan and submit it for endorsement by the Executive Council.

#### **7. Supplementary application of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council**

The Working Group will operate under these Terms of Reference and any directions given by the Executive Council. Should circumstances arise, which are not provided for in these Terms of Reference, the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Working Group.

## **Annex II: Terms of reference for the Committee on Merit and Excellence**

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To ensure the implementation of decisions taken by the UN Tourism Executive Council at its 123rd session, as well as alignment with the proposed principles, approaches, and milestones, adjustments were made to the original version.

### **1. Background and rationale**

Recognizing the need to encourage and celebrate outstanding contributions to sustainable tourism development, innovation, leadership, and excellence within the global tourism sector, with the aim of creating and transferring new knowledge, the Executive Council endorsed the proposal from Brazil for the establishment of a Committee on Merit and Excellence. The Committee will serve as a catalyst for embedding principles of merit and distinction into the institutional fabric of UN Tourism, fostering a values-driven approach to acknowledging impactful contributions across the sector.

### **2. Objective**

To establish a dedicated mechanism for defining sufficient criteria and terms of conditions, evaluating and recognizing excellence in tourism-related efforts, promoting meritocratic values primarily among the Organization's Member States, as well as non-member States within the wider UN system, and proposing awards, honours, and commendations within the framework of UN Tourism.

### **3. Scope of work**

The Committee shall:

- a) Define clear and transparent criteria for evaluating merit and excellence in tourism practices, leadership, innovation, and impact;
- b) Review and assess nominations for UN Tourism recognitions, awards, or distinctions and propose improvements for the existing awards and respective themes;
- c) Ensure diversity, equity, and geographic balance in the selection and recognition process as well as active engagement of Member States and relevant professionals, including industry stakeholders and academics with concrete expertise throughout the selection process;
- d) Recommend recipients for commendation or other honours to the Executive Council for endorsement;
- e) Engage with relevant experts, academic institutions, and stakeholders to ensure the credibility of the selection processes;
- f) Propose to the Executive Council the creation of specific Coordinating Committees for the nomination and selection of candidates for various thematic awards (practitioner and academic);
- g) Oversee and provide guidance to the activities of the specific Coordinating Committees, ensuring coherence with the strategic direction established by the Executive Council;
- h) Propose both a long-term strategic framework and a short-term pilot for the awards initiative, noting that the inaugural edition shall be governed by a special format, with subsequent editions to be regulated through specific and differentiated rules approved by the Executive Council.
- i) A long-term strategic framework should be prepared and submitted by the Committee as a set of recommendations to the 127th session of the UN Tourism Executive Council for endorsement. This strategic document shall contain a thorough justification, rationale, and arguments on how various practitioner and academic awards should be managed by the Organization in the long run, including the criteria and overall procedures to ensure the involvement of Member States in the discussion, evaluation, and final decision-making in a fair and transparent manner. The review and assessment of existing practices, along with recommendations for improvements, the creation of specific Coordinating Committees, their composition and election process, and other substantive and procedural aspects must form an integral part of the final set of recommendations by the Committee.
- j) The Secretariat will submit the proposed composition for subsequent editions to the 127th session of the Executive Council for approval within the long-term framework.

### **4. Composition for the Inaugural Edition in the framework of the 26th session of the General Assembly:**

The Committee shall be composed of:

- a) The Chairs of the six Regional Commissions;

- b) The Chair of the Executive Council will serve as the Chair of the Committee for the duration of its mandate;
- c) The Vice-Chair will be elected by the Members of the Committee for a one-year renewable term;
- d) All Member States may participate as observers; and
- e) Independent experts may be invited to provide opinions in accordance with the theme, at the Committee's discretion.

## **5. Governance and operations**

- a) Only the Committee members listed under item 4(a) hold voting rights for deliberations;
- b) The Committee shall report directly to the Executive Council;
- c) Meetings shall be held at least four times a year, in person or virtually, with provision for extraordinary meetings as needed;
- d) The Chair of the Executive Council through the UN Tourism Secretariat shall be responsible for issuing a note verbale regarding the terms of reference and the call for expressions of interest to the Members;
- e) The working language of the Committee will be English;
- f) The UN Tourism Secretariat shall provide technical and administrative support.

## **6. Outputs and deliverables**

- a) Annual report to the Executive Council with recommendations for recognitions;
- b) Evaluation framework and documentation guidelines for nominations;
- c) A published list of awardees and summary of recognized initiatives (subject to consent);
- d) Contributions to visibility and communication strategies of UN Tourism on merit and innovation.

## **7. Timeline**

- a) Before mid-October – First meeting of the Committee
- b) Beginning of November – Launch of the open call for projects nominations.

## **8. Resource requirements**

The Committee shall operate using the existing resources of its Member States and of the UN Tourism Secretariat, including its regional offices. No funding is foreseen from the regular budget of the Organization. The Committee may consider attracting voluntary contributions and extra budgetary funds, if necessary.