



[Spain Reaffirms Support for UNWTO and Announces New Headquarters Site](#)

The Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, announced during the inauguration of *FITUR 2019*, that he would place at the disposal of UNWTO a space in the Palacio de Congresos de Madrid (Madrid Congress Centre) to serve as the headquarters of the United Nations specialized agency, which has been based in Spain since its creation in 1976.

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[Refundit Wins 1st UNWTO Global Tourism Startup Competition](#)

Refundit, an Israeli startup, was declared the winner in the final phase of the 1st Global Tourism Startup Competition, organized by the UNWTO and Globalia, held within the framework of the FITUR International Tourism Fair, topping 3,000 entries from around the world.

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[Punta del Este Convention Bureau Receives First UNWTO.Quest Certification from UNWTO](#)

UNWTO has granted UNWTO.QUEST Certification to the Punta del Este Convention Bureau, which became the first destination management organization in the world to receive this certification.

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[First ever UNWTO/IPSOS Survey – Citizens recognize the positive impact of tourism](#)

According to the first ever global survey conducted by UNWTO and IPSOS, 47% of respondents think 'they live in cities with a high number of tourists'. Over 50% considers tourism has a positive impact in generating wealth and promoting cultural exchanges, and 49% feel there should be measures to improve tourism management. Only 12% of respondents favor limitations to the number of visitors.

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[Fundación ONCE and UNWTO join forces to promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the tourism sector.](#)

The Executive Vice-President of Fundación ONCE, Alberto Durán, and the Secretary-General of UNWTO, Zurab Pololikashvili, signed in Madrid a letter of intent to promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the tourism sector.

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On the ground

Every year, FITUR in the Spanish capital Madrid – one of the world's largest tourism trade fairs – kicks off the yearly season of top tourism gatherings. FITUR 2019 set the backdrop to introduce the overarching theme for UNWTO during this year: Education, Skills and Jobs, in line with the 2019 theme for World Tourism Day: 'Tourism and Jobs: a better future for all'. Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili inaugurated the fair alongside the King of Spain, Felipe VI. This was preceded by the welcome reception offered the prior evening by Spain's Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, to ministers and tourism leaders from around the world, alongside the UNWTO Secretary-General and the Spanish Minister of Tourism. This event was a first and displayed a show of great unity and support for tourism as a key economic sector.

Top government officials, professionals and key figures in tourism gathered for a multitude of UNWTO activities that included the Finals of the First UNWTO Global Tourism Startup Competition, the inauguration of Wakalua, the first Global Tourism Innovation hub, based in Madrid, meetings,

workshops and the [10th Anniversary of INVESTOUR](#) (the Tourism Investment and Business Forum for Africa). On the sidelines of FITUR, UNWTO signed agreements with various member nations to improve their tourism statistics, plan upcoming projects and prepare for the upcoming year.



Events

[UNWTO/Chimelong Sub-regional Capacity Building Workshop on Sustainable Tourism and Biodiversity Conservation for the Mekong Subregion Member States \(19 February 2019, Pakse, Laos\)](#)

[Nineteenth meeting - Committee on Statistics \(26-27 February 2019, Madrid, Spain\)](#)

[4th UNWTO Euro-Asian Mountain Tourism Conference \(2-5 March 2019, Berchtesgaden, Germany\)](#)

[ITB 2019 \(6-10 March 2019, Berlin, Germany\)](#)

[Silk Road Ministers Meeting at ITB Berlin 2019 \(6 March 2019, Berlin, Germany\)](#)

[Ministerial Panel Discussion on Digital Skills in Tourism \[7 March 2019, 10:00-11:30, Berlin \(Germany\)\]](#)



Reports

[International Tourist Arrivals Reach 1.4 billion Two Years Ahead of Forecasts](#)

2018 totalled 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals (+6%), consolidating 2017 strong results and proving to be the second strongest year since 2010. Given the remarkable growth of international arrivals in recent years, the 1.4 billion mark has been reached two years ahead of UNWTO's long term forecast issued in 2010. The Middle East (+10%) and Africa (+7%) grew above the world average while Asia and the Pacific and Europe grew at 6%. Overall results were driven by a favourable economic environment and strong outbound demand from major source markets.

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UNWTO in collaboration with The Globalia group, has launched Wakalua, the first global tourism innovation hub. Wakalua was created to support and discover startups and innovative projects, in order to co-create initiatives involving the different actors of the tourism sector, and collaborate in the transformation of the sector. The winner of the 1st UNWTO Tourism Startup Competition, Refundit, and the rest of the finalists will be the first "residents" of this hub, where they will have the opportunity to bring their innovative projects to life.
