

World Tourism Day: harnessing new technologies to transform travel

The United Nations is marking this year's [World Tourism Day](#) by exploring how technological advances such as big data, artificial intelligence and digital platforms can contribute to the way people travel and foster innovation in the tourism industry.

"The digital transformation is about providing benefits to all, and we are making sure that tourism contributes to this global commitment," said Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization ([UNWTO](#)).

Tourism has become one of the fastest growing and most important economic sectors in the world, according to the Madrid-based UNWTO, with international tourist arrivals having grown from 25 million in 1950 to nearly 1.3 billion today. The sector represents an estimated 10 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 1 in 10 jobs globally.

UNWTO expects that tourism will continue to grow at an average of 3 per cent annually until 2030, as more people have access to travel thanks to the decline in the price of transport, especially air transport, and growing middle classes worldwide.

"The sheer size of global tourism and its impact on many other sectors, and all of the Sustainable Development Goals, puts it at the forefront of social responsibility, which today goes hand-in-hand with innovation on all levels," said Mr. Pololikashvili.

"Harnessing innovation and digital advances provides tourism with opportunities to improve inclusiveness, local community empowerment and efficient resource management, amongst other objectives within the wider sustainable development agenda," he added.

In his message for the Day, [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said the wide reach of tourism into many sectors, from infrastructure and energy to transport and sanitation, and its huge impact on job creation, make it a vital contributor to the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). At the same time, tourism plays a "pivotal" role in advancing cultural understanding and bringing people together.

"Yet tourism needs innovation in technology to realize its potential contributions," he stated, adding that its benefits need to flow to host communities.

"On World Tourism Day, I call on governments to support digital technologies that can transform the way we travel, reduce the ecological burden of tourism and bring the benefits of tourism to all."

Maduro 'brings the truth' about Venezuela to UN Assembly; says he is ready to meet US President Trump

The people of Venezuela are being harassed and attacked in the economic, political, diplomatic spheres, and facing "permanent aggression by the media" at the hands of the United States, President Nicolás Maduro told the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday.

"The oligarchies of the continent – and those who rule them from Washington – want political control of Venezuela," he said to world leaders gathered for the Assembly's annual general debate, where he pledged to "bring the truth" that "Venezuela is on its feet."

Indeed, he said that the reportedly large numbers of Venezuelans fleeing the country, were "a media creation".

At the same time, he said he was willing to talk with US President Donald Trump, with an "open agenda" on all issues that the US Government wanted to discuss.

President Maduro promised to do "with humility; frankly; with sincerity in spite of the immense historical, ideological and social differences "that separate both countries, since Venezuela" hoists the flag of the dialogue of civilizations".

He the aggression against his county had been driven by the fact that Venezuela "has raised an autonomous project of democratic revolution, of social claim and of building a new model of society based on the historical roots of the nation." The country was also under threat for geopolitical reasons, since it has the "largest oil reserves in the world", as well as natural gas reserves and gold.

He denounced that, during the last two years, Venezuela had been subjected to unilateral illegal measures of economic blockade such as preventing it from using the dollar "by the authorities of the US treasury secretariat."

On day two of UN General Assembly's

annual debate, it's multilateralism all the way

Across the political spectrum, from economies large and small, representing all continents, Heads of State and Government crossed the lines of political and ideological division to join in their advocacy of a multilateral world order.

"In a global context that is increasingly fragmented, multipolar, and in constant evolution, we are convinced, in fact, that the international community needs [more effective multilateralism](#) and a United Nations that is strengthened in its role as a pillar of an international system based on peace, justice and equity," said Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, whose Government has been described in the media as populist, on the second day of the Assembly' annual general debate.

From the opposite pole, President Miguel Díaz-Canel of Cuba [declared](#): "The exercise of multilateralism and full respect for the principles and rules of International Law to advance towards a multipolar, democratic and equitable world, are required in order to ensure peaceful coexistence, preserve international peace and security and find lasting solutions for systemic problems."

In many respects the leaders' speeches were like 'state of the nation' reports in which they laid out a balance sheet of challenges faced and achievement attained by their individual countries, but many soon returned to the theme of the essential need for multilateralism.

"The world has slowly drifted ever more [worryingly towards unilateral action](#)," Namibian President Hage Geingob said, stressing that this goes against the fundamental tenets of democracy upon which the UN is built and which are necessary for sustained inclusive development. "It is for this reason that multilateralism must be embraced with greater urgency."

Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo [underscored](#) the importance of multilateralism in trade. "Today, as we speak, a trade war is being stoked between the two largest economies of the world (US and China)," he said. "The consequences will affect those who have had no say, including small countries like Ghana. These events provide proof, if some were needed, that ours is an interdependent world."

Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic [added her voice](#) to the chorus. "Multilateralism is under ever-increasing strain. This is of particular concern since the most important issues for the mankind cannot be resolved by any State singlehandedly, or in isolation. Multilateralism is indispensable," she said, while acknowledging the need for changes in the system and warning against complacency.

For Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid "nothing is more important than [truly](#)

[effective multilateralism](#)" in terms of efficiency.

Uruguayan President Tabaré Vázquez [called for](#) the promotion of multilateralism "in all its facets (political, economic, cultural etc.) as the best way to confront the global challenges that humanity faces."

Meanwhile, Slovakian President Andrej Kiska acknowledged that [multilateralism is not always an easy way](#) "but it is the only sustainable one," while President Klaus Iohannis of Romania stressed the need to reach out to younger people, civil society, journalists and business people. "We need them all for the cause of multilateralism and global leadership," he said.

Not every speaker endorsed unalloyed multilateralism, with Polish President Andrzej Duda [warning](#) that not everyone who claims to be a proponent of multilateralism thinks of it in terms of the equality of States.

"One can say that there is a negative multilateralism, which boils down to the concert of powers, a division into spheres of influence and the conviction that the fate of others can be decided without their participation," he said. "Europe and Poland were often victims of this kind of multilateralism, starting from the 18th century, throughout the 19th century, to the times of the Cold War."

He called for the positive multilateralism of equal States and free nations, not that of usurpation and hierarchy, and advocated giving weaker countries additional opportunities, including additional voting power, or additional territorial representation in decision-making bodies.

Calling for [strengthened multilateralism](#), Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa denounced current trends towards unilateralism.

"We do not understand, rather we deplore, unilateral tropism and disinvestment in international organizations," he stressed. "They represent a political shortsightedness, which runs the risk of repeating the mistakes of almost a century ago."

On the specific issues where multilateralism is essential King Tupou VI of Tonga [welcomed](#) the convening on the margins of the general debate of the third High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, noting that combatting the scourge is grossly underfunded.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta cited the current global trading situation as evidence that [multilateralism is under severe strain](#). "Rarely has the system of trade and security that was established following the Second World War, under the aegis of the United Nations, been under greater strain. The populism and extremism unleashed at the national level has brought forward powerful constituencies that want a dismantling of the global order," he warned.

And Palau President Tommy Remengesau spotlighted [climate change](#) in calling the General Assembly "this most important of forums of multilateralism," citing the record-breaking cyclones that have hit the Asia-Pacific region this year. "Building the resilience of vulnerable countries to the impacts of

climate change must be an urgent global priority,” he stressed.

Finally, while asserting their commitment to multilateralism, many leaders, especially from Africa, called for democratizing the UN by enlarging the 15-member [Security Council](#), the only UN body whose decisions are legally binding, to include increased representation for African and other developing countries.

[From UN Assembly podium, Central African Republic leader appeals for lifting arms embargo](#)

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Central African Republic (CAR) Head of State Faustin Touadera on Wednesday thanked the world body for helping to restore stability in his country, but also called for the complete lifting of the UN Security Council arms embargo affecting its army.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR ([MINUSCA](#)) was established in 2014 with the protection of civilians its top priority, after fighting between the mostly Christian anti-Balaka militia and the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition tore the country apart.

An arms embargo imposed at the same time was renewed for another 12 months earlier this year.

“Our ambition is to contribute at MINUSCA’s side to the immense effort for the stabilization and return to peace in CAR,” Mr. Touadera declared. “But to fulfil this, allow me to reiterate from this lofty tribune our call for the total lifting of the arms embargo which still weighs heavily on our national army.”

Only last month armed anti-Balaka fighters attacked MINUSCA personnel in the southern-central part of the country, killing a Burundian member.

[Full statement \(in French\) available here](#)

[Colombian President calls for](#)

international support to ensure success of 'fragile' peace process

Describing himself as part of a new generation of Colombians, President Iván Duque Márquez told the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday that in the wake of the two-year old peace deal, his country was uniting around shared objectives, building a path of progress with democratic institutions.

Economic growth is being maintained in the midst of complex regional volatilities, with cities transforming into productive sectors and the middle class expanding. While rising to the challenges of globalization, the Government was also focusing on social justice and bridging social gaps," he said, and to that end a plan is being developed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) by 2030.

Stressing that peace requires the rule of law, he said his Government will work towards completing the disarmament and reinsertion process, jumpstarted after Colombia signed a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) that ended the Western hemisphere's longest-running conflict

Mr. Duque stressed that the peace process his Government inherited was fragile due to a lack of funds and the complex and dispersed institutional architecture, but Colombia will fulfill its commitment vis-à-vis those who chose to turn away from violence. "Financial support of the international community will ensure that goal," he said, adding that the law would be enforced in an exemplary manner.

"For peace to shine in Columbia, we must overturn drug trafficking," he continued. Noting that the recent incremental trafficking increase has become a fuel for organized crime, he expressed his will to break up the transnational crime networks. Acknowledging that prevention is critical from a public health approach, he also stressed that the drug traffickers were predators.

He also stressed the importance of tackling corruption in a determined manner, as it is threat to democracy, social values and institutions. "From the first day of our Government, we presented measures before Congress", launching an ambitious initiative supported nationwide.

Drawing attention to the situation of Venezuelans fleeing their country, he stressed that Colombia had opened its doors to close to a million of them. The humanitarian crisis in the region was caused by a "dictatorship that annihilates liberties", Mr. Duque said. The international community must immediately demand the liberation of political prisoners, he continued, calling for the use of all international mechanisms to denounce, investigate and sanction those responsible for that situation.

Full statement (Spanish) available here.