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PRESS RELEASE
MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE

**UN TOURISM CELEBRATES WORLD TOURISM DAY 2025 IN
MELAKA, MALAYSIA: A MILESTONE FOR SUSTAINABLE
TRANSFORMATION OF TOURISM**

Melaka, 30 September 2025 - UN Tourism celebrated World Tourism Day 2025 in the historic city of Melaka, Malaysia, under the theme “Tourism and Sustainable Transformation.” This global Day of Recognition for the sector and its vital importance marked a pivotal moment in advancing tourism as a catalyst for positive change, resilience, and sustainable development worldwide.

The celebrations, hosted with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia, brought together global leaders, policymakers, industry experts and local communities to share innovative ideas and chart a sustainable future for the tourism sector. In line with the Malaysia MADANI framework, the celebrations underscored values of sustainability, inclusivity and shared prosperity, ensuring that tourism continues to benefit people and the world. Aligned with the 7th edition of the World Tourism Conference (WTC), the event showcased Malaysia’s rich cultural heritage, breathtaking landscapes and strong commitment to sustainable and responsible tourism.

A Global Call for Sustainable Action

This year’s theme, “Tourism and Sustainable Transformation,” underscored tourism’s potential to drive social progress, economic growth and environmental stewardship. The event highlighted the need for good governance, strategic planning and inclusive policies to ensure tourism benefits all while preserving cultural and natural heritage.

In his official message, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized, “Tourism is a powerful driver of transformation. It creates jobs, fuels local economies and builds bridges across cultures. Yet, it must be sustainable to protect the very places and communities it celebrates. Let’s

harness tourism as a force for resilience, sustainability and shared progress.”

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili added, “World Tourism Day 2025 in Melaka has shown the world that tourism can be a force for good when guided by sustainability and inclusivity. By working together, we can transform tourism into a tool for empowerment, cultural preservation and environmental protection.”

Highlights of World Tourism Day 2025

Malaysia’s Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, H.E. Dato Sri Tiong King Sing, welcomed participants from around the world to Melaka at the opening of World Tourism Day 2025 and the 7th World Tourism Conference. In his address, global tourism leaders were urged to move beyond words and take concrete action to build a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient industry.

Tourism remains one of the world’s most dynamic sectors, with global arrivals fully rebounding in 2024 and continuing to grow by 5% in the first half of 2025. Malaysia mirrors this resilience by welcoming 38 million international visitors last year and recording a 17.9% increase in the first half of 2025. But growth alone is no longer the measure of success. True progress lies in ensuring tourism uplifts communities, protects ecosystems, preserves culture and builds resilience for the future.

As leaders gather in Melaka for World Tourism Day and the World Tourism Conference, the imperative is to shift from ceremonial dialogue to tangible delivery. The sector faces mounting pressures: from over-tourism and inequality to global competitiveness challenges. In Malaysia, issues such as heritage site congestion and uneven investment have contributed to a decline in the global tourism index. The call is clear: inclusive, innovative, and sustainable transformation must be urgently prioritized. Incremental steps are no longer sufficient; the future of tourism depends on bold, collective action.

Affirming this commitment, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, The Right Honourable Dato' Sri Haji Fadillah bin Yusof, on behalf of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, today officiated the opening of World Tourism Day 2025 and the 7th World Tourism Conference in Melaka.

Highlighting tourism's role as a unifying force, the Deputy Prime Minister stressed that growth must be inclusive and resilient, underpinned by sustainability, innovation and global cooperation. He outlined Malaysia's initiatives – from expanding high-value tourism segments and digital nomad hubs, to investments in sustainable aviation fuel and community-led ecotourism – as examples of balancing economic progress with social and environmental responsibility. He also announced that Malaysia will join the UN Tourism International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) with a pilot project in Mersing, Johor. The Deputy Prime Minister concluded by urging delegates to ensure tourism becomes “a blessing for generations to come, not a burden on the future.

The celebrations in Melaka featured a series of activities, including high-level panel discussions and cultural showcases focused on sustainable tourism practices and innovative strategies geared towards the resilience of the tourism industry. The focus was placed on building sustainable transformation through:

- Investing in Education and Skills;
- Supporting Local Economies;
- Advancing Climate Action; and
- Cultural Exchange.

World Tourism Conference 2025: A Framework for Collaboration

Held in the framework of World Tourism Day, the 7th edition of the WTC in Melaka served as a platform for fostering stronger bonds and innovative ideas for the global tourism industry.

The conference brought together stakeholders to discuss strategies for sustainable tourism development, focusing on resilience, inclusivity, and environmental stewardship. Key sessions explored topics such as digital transformation in tourism, community-based tourism models, and climate-neutral travel solutions, aligning with the theme “Tourism and Sustainable Transformation.”

Looking Ahead

To conclude the official celebrations, Malaysia handed over the hosting of World Tourism Day to El Salvador. World Tourism Day 2026 will be held under the theme of “Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to redesign tourism” and will address the role of tourism in embracing digital transformation and integrating artificial intelligence (AI).

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