

*Background Guide*

UN WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION  
**Sustainability & Post-COVID Tourism**

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# JACKRABBIT MUN V

L.B. POLY - MAY 20th, 2023

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# HEAD CHAIR LETTER

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Hello Delegates!

My name is Lail Khansa, and I will be your Head Chair for the UNWTO room. Aside from chairing this room, I am one of the webmasters. As a webmaster, I update the website with conference links and set up Jackrabbit MUN rooms with all their information.

I am currently a junior at Poly and I have been doing model UN since I was a freshman. Outside of MUN, I am co-president for Speech and Debate, President for Poly Global Fund, and part of the swim team. In addition to these activities, I love to play the piano, both classical and jazz, and do people's taxes.

I'm looking forward to seeing all your creative ideas that you planned for this room. With COVID, climate change, and political conflicts around the world, it seemed appropriate to host this room since many countries and people are suffering, economically, physically, and emotionally. Good luck in your preparation and have fun! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or anyone else.

Thanks and Best Regards,

Lail Khansa

UNWTO Committee | Head Chair

[lail.khansa@yahoo.com](mailto:lail.khansa@yahoo.com)



# VICE CHAIR LETTER

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Hello Delegates,

My name is James Gageby, and I will be your Vice-Chair for the UNWTO Sustainability and Post-Covid Tourism Committee. I have been in Long Beach Poly's Model United Nations Program for four years. The most helpful skill I have learned from MUN is having the confidence to improvise effectively when I am not prepared to give a presentation. The research techniques and speech planning skills I gained through the program, I will continue to utilize for future academic and professional careers. Two years prior I served as Crisis Staff and background guide author in Jackrabbit MUN III in the Solar Flare committee.

I am currently a senior at Poly, and I will be attending UC San Diego next fall. Outside of MUN, I am a member of Long Beach Poly's Varsity Water Polo team, Swim and Dive team, and Varsity Speech and Debate team. I am the Founder and President of Long Beach Poly's Botany Club which uses recycled bottle containers from plastic water bottles to turn into pots to grow an array of plants from succulents to herbs, reducing the number of pollutants in the ocean and promoting an environmentalist mindset for the students of Poly. Botany Club allows me to share my passion for caring for plants with my peers and create a stress-free zone at Poly.

I am looking forward to the innovative ideas and plans you propose for reviving the Tourism Industry after the recent Covid-19 Pandemic while protecting the world's ecosystems. This matter is a serious conflict facing world leaders at the present moment. I am excited to see what ideas your bright minds have in store. I wish you the best of luck with your research and preparation, if you have any questions, please ask.

Sincerely,

James Gageby

UNWTO Committee | Vice Chair

[jamesgageby04@gmail.com](mailto:jamesgageby04@gmail.com)



# RAPPORTEUR LETTER

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Hello Delegates!

My name is Mackenzie Mathieu and I will be the Rapporteur for the UNWTO room this year. This is my first year in the Long Beach Poly Model United Nations Program and I have been enjoying learning from all of our experienced members.

I am currently a sophomore in the Poly Pace program and along with being part of MUN, I participate in Speech and Debate and Pace Club. I am also part of the Poly water polo team, club water polo, and I am team captain of the Frosh-Soph swim team this year. During the pandemic I taught myself how to knit and crochet and love to read and travel.

I am so excited to see what you all come up with in regards to this room. It is such an amazing opportunity to understand how the recent COVID-19 pandemic has changed so much that we might not even see. As someone who dreams of traveling the world I hope to find new ways to make it sustainable. I hope you enjoy learning about how important ecotourism is and find innovative solutions that are out of the box.

Sincerely,

Mackenzie Mathieu

UNWTO Committee | Rapporteur

[mackenziegmathieu@gmail.com](mailto:mackenziegmathieu@gmail.com)



# POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES

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- Position Papers are due at 11:59 PM on **Saturday, May 13** in order to receive feedback and be eligible for **research AND committee awards**.
- Position Papers are due at 11:59 PM on **Friday, May 19** in order to be eligible for **committee awards ONLY**.
- Position Papers can be submitted through the committee email:
  - **unwtojackrabbit2023@gmail.com**
- At the top of each paper, include your character/country name, first and last name, school name, and appropriate committee.
  - United States
  - First Last
  - School Name
  - UNWTO
- Papers should be emailed as a PDF file.
  - Paper content should also be copied and pasted into the body of the email so it can still be graded in the event of technical difficulties
  - Please name the file and email subject line [Committee\_Character Name]
    - Ex: **UNWTO\_UnitedStates**
- Papers should be 1-2 pages single-spaced with additional Works Cited pages in MLA format.
- Papers should be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font and include no pictures or graphics.
- Please include the following sections for each committee topic:
  - Background & UN Involvement
  - Position of your Country
  - Possible Solutions

If you have any questions or concerns, please email your respective chairs.



# COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

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First created under a different name, the First International Congress of National Tourism Bodies met in London to create a new international non-government organization to replace the International Union of Official Tourist Propaganda Organizations (IUOTPO), established in 1934.



Since then, the UNWTO has been promoting tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide. At the same time, the UNWTO aims to support the conservation of biodiversity and the social welfare and the economic security of the host countries and communities.

Throughout its years, the UNWTO has generated market knowledge, promoted competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, fostered tourism education and training, and worked to make tourism an effective tool for development through technical assistance projects in over 100 countries around the world. This was possible with the UNWTO's membership that includes 160 Member States, 6 Associate Members and over 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

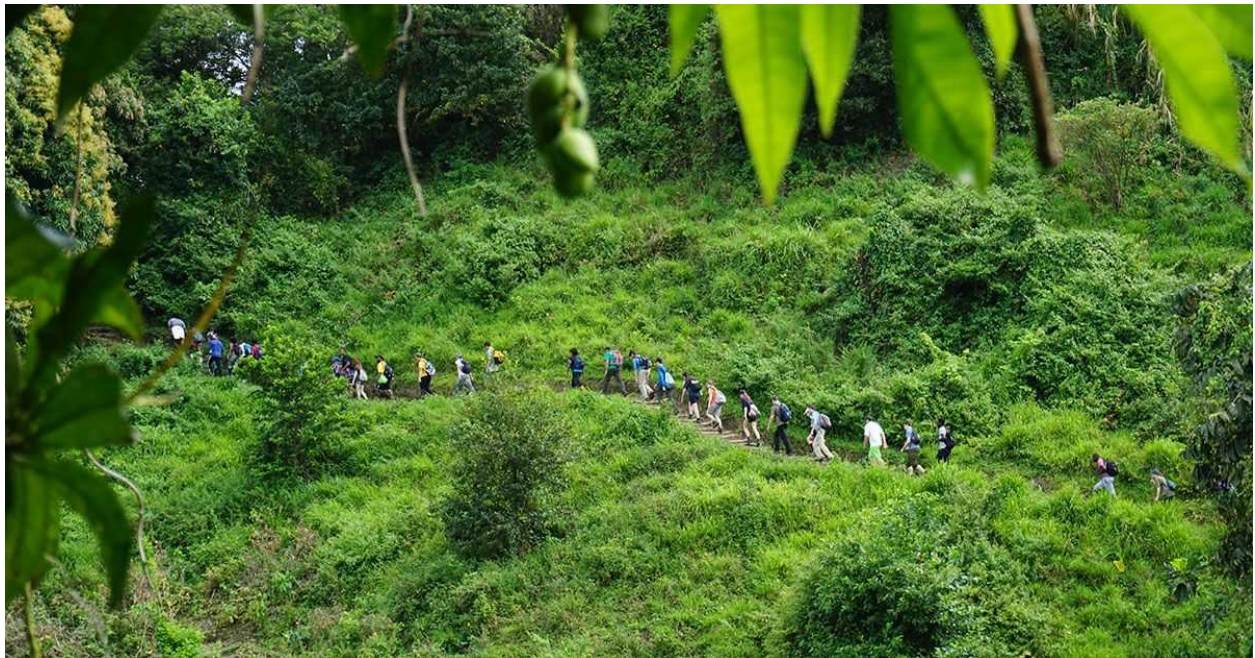


# TOPIC SYNOPSIS

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From the Appalachian mountains in Switzerland to the rainforests of Brazil, our planet is home to some of the world's most popular ecotourism destinations. However, while these countries have manufacturing and trade to maintain their economies, many others rely solely on the tourism industry. With the population at 8 billion and growing every day, urbanization is at its highest rate in history.

Sadly, the destruction of landscapes to make way for housing and development puts these economies—which are so reliant on the tourism attracted to these landscapes—at risk. Of course, this is only half the problem. Tourists themselves also put landscapes at risk. Water pollution, irresponsible trespassing, and overconsumption are only some of the ways tourists destroy environments and deplete resources. Delegates in this committee will be responsible for addressing these dual issues, balancing their country's environmental concerns with economic affairs.





# BACKGROUND

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## Pre-COVID

Ecotourism was first conceptualized in the 1980s as a way for the travel industry to continue to grow while also protecting the environment. In the 1990s, conservation became more prominent and further increased the draw of ecotourism. The United Nations named 2002 the “International Year of Ecotourism” and the Center for Responsible Travel was created the next year. Since then, ecotourism has continued to be a growing industry as more people are willing to find environmentally friendly options for their travel. As of 2021, ecotourism was estimated at just under \$186 billion USD and is expected to expand at a growth rate of 15.2% until 2030.

## Post-COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in lower levels of tourism around the world. Ecotourism, focusing on an environmentally and economically safe alternative to the prior harmful practices, was affected even more than normal tourism. The same regulations that kept people from traveling or leaving their homes for non-essential activities reduced ecotourism companies’ revenue. In many developing countries that rely heavily on ecotourism for income, residents have been financially affected and have



had to search for other sources of income. This search has resulted in increased poaching, wildlife trafficking, illegal fishing, and deforestation.

While in theory, the time without human interaction would let the environment flourish, many people turned to harming the environment in order to sustain themselves. Many of the negative impacts listed above were mainly because the workers in popular ecotourism locations were not always on-sight because of social distancing regulations. As countries emerge out of the struggle of the pandemic and face only enduring economic challenges, the time to rebalance into normal will be reasonable as long as businesses that were challenged over this time are given help.

The big question is in regard to the ecosystems that might be permanently harmed by the actions of this pandemic. The full effects of the COVID-19 shutdown are not apparent; we are not yet able to predict long-term environmental impacts. As people who work in nature conservation are returning to their work, they are giving a more detailed view of what post-COVID solutions are to the negative economic and environmental situations that many ecotourism-heavy countries are experiencing this year.

## Urbanization

Urbanization benefits the tourism industry in terms of transportation, people, and communication. A study in China found



that urbanization enhances the environment while increasing tourism. This is because of a better use of space, reducing the amount of land per person, while also reducing



the population's carbon footprint. Furthermore, tourist cities, such as Los Angeles and Paris, are built solely for consumption. The UNWTO even stated that tourists look for urban cities for architectural, technological, and businesses.

However, there are many downsides associated with this tourism, mainly environmental. To achieve urbanization, many natural resources are needed, which results in deforestation, habitat loss, and extraction of fresh water. Additionally, big cities tend to have high pollution and low air quality, leading to more health risks. The effects of urbanization differ in most tourist destinations, so it is important to understand each country's needs based on their tourism hot spots.

## **Environment**

All this urbanization also leads to serious environmental impacts. The majority of the problems are deforestation, habitat loss, and extraction of fresh water. China is the most impacted from urbanization, with its temperatures rising more than the global average. The United States, though an industrialized nation that contributes about half the carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, is second.



Tourism also has another factor that seriously impacts the environment—transportation. Overall, tourism accounts for 5% of all greenhouse gas emissions, 90% of that comes from transportation. Natural resources are also at risk due to major overconsumption of resources, including building materials and water. More resource consumption is deforestation and the drainage of wetlands and mangroves, both vital



components of the environment. This consumption has led to severe soil erosion in the affected areas and a water crisis.

Tourism in the form of cruise ships is detrimental to many international water sources. These cruise-liners dump large amounts of waste into the ocean every year, polluting the environment. This is especially harmful to impoverished nations that



already have scarce access to fresh water and cannot afford to fund conservation efforts. Tourism consumes a lot of water from hotels, pools, restaurants, theme parks, and other recreational activities. Tourism is the largest consumer of water in areas like the Caribbean and Polynesia.

## Cultural Identities

Dr. Taleb Refai, Secretary General of the UNWTO stated, "The power of tourism is to build peace and mutual understanding. This industry puts smiles on the faces of people, those visiting, and those hosting. It is an industry of hope and optimism." The value of tourism lies not merely in its economic profit, but in the cultural exchange and the unification of people from different backgrounds to create new memories and experiences.

Today, tourism is the biggest employer and generator of foreign exchange globally. According to research by the World Travel and Tourism Council, countries with more accessible and sustainable tourism sectors tend to be more peaceful. Despite the beneficial side of tourism, there can be certain harmful socio-cultural effects caused by the recent uptick in tourism globally. In response to the growing



sectors of tourism, communities have begun displaying upstaged versions of cultural experiences and products, this behavior is called commodification.

The result of commodification is the destruction of the authenticity of the existing culture to satisfy tourists.

Commodification takes



authentic experiences away from the tourist while making indigenous cultures lose meaning in their cultural offerings. A way to counteract commodification is by emphasizing the cultural fabric of communities by creating a balance between real and staged experiences and managing the flow of tourists to acceptable levels that will not alter the cultural perspective. Each tourism sector must determine the carrying capacity threshold that can be used to manage tourist' flow and ultimately prevent compromising environmental and cultural integrity or negatively affecting the visitor's experience. Furthermore, indigenous cultures need to clarify their position to determine the amount of tourism impact that is possible without damaging the native culture.

For example, in Jordan, a local entity, Al-Marj Development and Training, launched a project in the suburbs of As-Salt city to support Jordan's variety of farms with a generous farming community. With support from the USAID Building and Economic Sustainability through Tourism (BEST) project, six farm experiences were developed in which local farmers and their families introduced visitors to a typical day for their families.



As the tourism sector grew, the Al-Marj company's work led to an awareness of the benefits of tourism as a force of economic growth, engaged the farmers in tourism development planning, and instilled a sense of pride in their cultural values and authenticity when engaging in tourism activities. This in turn resulted in an increase in economic profits while the farmers maintained their sense of cultural identity. This system of agricultural tourism paves the way for future ventures of tourist attractions that create economic profit for native communities, while preserving the local communities and their unique cultural heritage.

Additionally, there is a religious factor to the prevalence of tourism. In Mexico, the Mayan and Aztec pyramids are visited by millions of people every year. Costa Rica makes billions of dollars each year off tourist spending alone and employs hundreds of



thousands of people. Across the board, tourism stimulates local economies. Religion produces impressive cultural and architectural feats like the Monument to the Divine Savior in El Salvador and Brazil's "Christ the Redeemer". The

preservation of this culture, however, becomes a difficult task when it is opened to the public. In January of 2023, a Polish tourist caused outrage for climbing the steps of the sacred temple of Kukulcan in Mexico. He was promptly arrested and hit with a stick by a local. An incident in 2018 sparked backlash from Egyptian officials when a tourist couple had intercourse on the Great Pyramid of Giza. The danger that tourism poses to sacred aspects of culture is real and ever-present.



## Current Statistics of Tourism Post Covid-19

According to the UNWTO, tourism in 2022 increased 130% from 2021. January 2022 recorded 18 million tourists, more than the total amount of tourist recorded in the entire year of 2021. Although this seems to be an increase in tourism levels, international arrivals are still 67% lower than pre-pandemic rates. In 2022 Europe (199%) and the Americas (97%) experienced the strongest growth in tourism rates.

In 2022, Asia and the Pacific experienced the least amount of growth, with only a 44% increase. The recent war in Ukraine has lowered tourism levels slightly, since Russia and Ukraine only accounted for 3% of global tourism. The tourism rates are improving but have not yet recovered from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## History of Tourist Hotspots

Nations that are most often visited by tourists are roughly spread across the eastern hemisphere. This can be traced back to the origin of the concept of tourism.

During the Grand Tour in the 1600s, upper class Europeans would take a tour of European countries like Germany, Italy, and France. Today, these countries are some of the most visited. Taking vacations in foreign countries became popular during the 1900s with the



creation of the airplane by the Wright brothers and an increase in middle class wealth.

Correlating with a rise in mainstream tourism, the world saw an increase in the amount of annually greenhouse gasses emissions. Nations with high rates of tourism tend to be rich financially, culturally, and architecturally. Paris, the most visited city annually, attracts people because of sites like the Louvre art museum and the Eiffel



Tower. Some countries, like Mexico, have high tourism rates because of a large population of people with heritage in their country but don't live in it.

### **Economic Reliance on Tourism**

Countries that rely on tourism are generally island countries. For example, Aruba, Bahamas, and the Maldives rely on tourism for about 30% of their Growth Domestic Product (GDP). There are also many non-island countries that rely on tourism including Costa Rica, Brazil, and Egypt. All these countries, excluding Egypt, rely on a good environment, which is why deforestation, overfishing, and destroying coral reefs, can cripple these countries' economies.

The main causes for this habitat destruction is mainly for food more than urbanization. Beef production requires a lot of space which is why countries cut down their trees. Additionally, the overfishing in the Bahamas, Maldives, and other island countries, are to meet food production demand. Therefore, to combat these issues,



companies have turned to meat substitutes to reduce meat consumption and fish harming. However, these two solutions come with negatives. For example, meat substitutes are highly processed and can be unhealthy and fish farms are considered to be inhumane and can easily pass parasites or diseases. This is why it

is important for countries to find ways to decrease their impact on the environment to allow tourist countries to thrive.





# UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

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In 1963 the United Nations Conference on Tourism and International Travel adopted a series of recommendations that defined the terms “visitor” and “tourist”, the simplification of international travel formalities, and a general resolution including technical cooperation, freedom of movement and absence of discrimination.

In 1991, The International Conference on Travel and Tourism Statistics in Ottawa, Canada adopted a resolution defining the statistical need of the tourism industry. In the same year, the IX WTO General Assembly in Buenos Aires, Argentina approved the recommendations of the Ottawa Conference and adopted the “Recommended Measures for security in Tourism” and "Creating Tourism Opportunities for Handicapped People in the Nineties”.

In 2002, UNWTO took part in the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa during which sustainable development of tourism was introduced. In 2003, the XV WTO General Assembly in Beijing, China approved the composition of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics and unanimously supported a sustainable tourism program aiding in the elimination of poverty.

In 2005 following an tsunami catastrophe, the UNWTO Secretary-General summoned an emergency meeting of the UNWTO Executive Council which adopted the Phuket Action Plan, speeding up the recovery of the tourism sectors affected by catastrophes. In 2007, the XVII session of the UNWTO General Assembly held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia adopted the Davos Declaration to encourage the UNWTO to engage itself in response to the challenge of climate change.

In 2009 the UNWTO responded to the global financial crisis by creating the Roadmap for Recovery, demonstrating the effect tourism can have on contributing to economic recovery and long-term transformation toward a Green Economy.

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# BLOC POSITIONS

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## **African Bloc:**

Countries in the African bloc are known for their beautiful environments, from glorious coastlines to soaring mountain peaks. However, with the changes in environment, droughts, coral bleaching and flooding is ruining Africa's beauty, The prominent concern for the African countries is poaching which causes 30,000 species to go extinct every year. However, tourism in Africa is not that high due to political and religious unrest.

Additionally, African countries are losing 20 million dollars in revenue due to poaching. African countries require better enforcement in national parks to guard its many endangered animals. There are many NGOs fighting poaching; one of the most dominant groups is VETPAW, a U.S. organization of veterans that train park rangers to combat poaching. Many others exist, but the problem is still damaging Africa's tourism.

## **Asia-Pacific Bloc:**

Many people visit Asia for its rich culture and magnificent natural landmarks. However, many Asian countries, especially those in Southeast Asia, have been heavily impacted by COVID and global warming. Overall, tourism in Asia has declined by 84% over the pandemic and it is mainly due to travel restrictions. Many Asian-Pacific countries like Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and many more, still have not reached their pre-pandemic peak.

This is largely because of stricter travel restrictions, which are greatly harming other countries' tourism industries. Western European tourism statistics are mainly low because of the lack of Asian tourists. In terms of climate change, rising sea levels



have greatly impacted Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar, Bangladesh and Vietnam. Extreme temperature changes will cause a loss of 37% of their GDP by 2048.

### **Eastern European Bloc:**

Countries in Eastern Europe are surrounded by seas, plains, and mountains which make up beautiful areas that could attract ecotourism. In the 1990s, Eastern Europe was the most polluted region in the world. Fortunately, within the last 20 or so years they have been working to clean the natural environment. Less tourism is occurring currently because of the Russia-Ukraine war, so it is unclear if the actions being taken by these countries are working especially well.

However, there is a clear economic impact on countries in Eastern Europe. Countries in the Baltic region have suffered a 10% decrease in tourism and the cruise industry has declined by 50%. Overall, tourism to Eastern Europe is declining by about 60%.

### **Latin American and Caribbean Bloc:**

The leader in Latin American and Caribbean tourism is Mexico with 25,847,000 visitors in 2019 before experiencing a 55% decline the next year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Visiting family members and historical pieces of architecture like the Mayan pyramids are the biggest pulls for tourists and visitors. Mexico also happens to have a very serious pollution problem. 1 in 17 Mexican deaths are tied to pollution in one way or another, an estimated 33,000 a year. There is a significant drop off between Mexico and other Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Notable countries are Brazil and the Dominican Republic, however their numbers are much lower than those of Mexico. Between 4-6 million annual visitors,



nowhere near the amount of the most visited countries. For this reason, there hasn't been a UNWTO meeting for this region in several years.

**Western European and Others Bloc:**

Countries in Europe, especially France and Spain, have more tourism than almost anywhere else in the world. Because of this, the EU is taking actions to assure sustainable practices are being implemented to aid both the environment and economy of their countries. The United States has established National Parks and the Park and Forest systems to regulate eco-tourism. Most Western countries have established rules to comply with the goal of ecotourism.



# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

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- How has COVID affected tourism in your country?
  - Why is this topic pertinent to your country specifically?
- How should this committee handle human degradation at tourist destinations?
- How should countries balance industrialization and urbanization with tourism, especially in countries with heavy reliance on tourism?
- How can you ensure safety for tourists, especially in tourist hot spots?
- What are NGOs that work to help with current issues within your own country and on an international scale?
- How can nations financially support the most affected countries?
  - Should there be a larger support program for global tourism?
- Where will you obtain funding for changes in the tourism industry?
  - Should it be up to individual countries to donate?
  - Or through the United Nations or an international NGO?
- What are some of the cultural effects of implementing newer technologies and initiatives into developing nations?



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