

 **TOURISM**



# **CCO BRIEF ON TOURISM**

**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE**  
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Tourism is a vital sector that significantly contributes to national economies while also supporting social and cultural development. Beyond helping countries make use of their unique assets, tourism promotes regional growth, improves infrastructure, generates public revenue, reduces external deficits, and increases national income. It also plays an important role in creating jobs, supporting fairer income distribution, and fostering the development of rural areas.

In today's global economy, unemployment remains one of the most pressing issues faced by many countries. As a labor-intensive industry, tourism makes a direct and substantial contribution to employment by creating a wide range of job opportunities.

Guided by UN Tourism, tourism had grown to be an essential pillar of sustainable development, recognized for its unique ability to generate opportunity for all and help provide solutions to some of the biggest problems. However, tourism sector was globally hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost overnight, international travel came to a near-complete standstill, grounding tourists and cutting off the lifeline the sector offers to developing nations as well as to communities, businesses and workers everywhere.

Tourism is also an important source of employment. In 2025, the sector supported a total of 366 million jobs globally, which is approximately 1 in 9 jobs. The sector also accounted for 1 in 3 new jobs created globally (WTTC).

Domestic visitors spent US\$5.63 trillion, growing 3.7% over the 2024 level. At the same time, spending by international visitors increased 3.2% annually to reach US\$2.02 trillion.

According to WTTC's latest Economic Impact Research (EIR), tourism and travel's global GDP contribution reached a record US\$11.6 trillion in 2025, accounting for 9.8% of the global economy. The sector's growth (4.1%) exceeded overall global economic growth (2.8%) by almost 50%, underscoring its role as a primary engine of global expansion. This exceptional performance confirms tourism (including travel) not only as a driver of recovery, but as a leading force shaping the future of the global economy.

WTTC's data also reveals a clear divergence in regional performance, with Asia-Pacific emerging as the fastest-growing region globally, while North America trails behind other major markets. This regional imbalance highlights how policy, investment, and international openness continue to shape the pace of growth across global markets.

Even in the face of economic instability and geopolitical disruptions, the travel and tourism industry continue to grow and perform strongly.

Based on to UN Tourism World Tourism Barometer, every global region recorded notable increases in international tourist numbers. Europe, the world's largest destination region, recorded 793 million international tourists in 2025, a 4% increase from 2024 and 6% more than in 2019. Western Europe (+5%) and Southern Mediterranean Europe (+3%) saw robust performance. Central and Eastern Europe rebounded strongly (+6%) though arrivals remained 9% below 2019 levels.

The Americas (218 million) recorded 1% growth last year, with mixed results across subregions. After a strong first half of 2025, the region saw small declines in the second half of the year, partly due to weak results in the United States. South America (+7%) and Central America (+5%) led results by subregion. Some destinations in the Caribbean (+0%) were affected by Hurricane Melissa in the last quarter of the year.

Africa (81 million) saw an 8% increase in arrivals in 2025, with particularly strong results in North Africa (+11%).

The Middle East recorded 3% growth in 2025, equivalent to 39% above pre-pandemic levels, the strongest results relative to 2019. The region virtually reached the mark of 100 million international visitors in 2025.

Arrivals in Asia and the Pacific (331 million) grew 6% last year but are still 9% below 2019 levels as the region continued to rebound. North-East Asia led performance with 13% growth over 2024, while South Asia recovered pre-pandemic levels.

According to UN Tourism evaluations, total export revenues from tourism (including receipts and passenger transport) are estimated at US\$ 2.2 trillion in 2025 based on available data. International tourism receipts saw extraordinary growth in 2025 following an already strong 2024, with many destinations posting a higher increase in receipts than arrivals.

UN Tourism's prospects for 2026 reflect a normalization of growth rates after a strong rebound in international arrivals in 2023 (+34%) and 2024 (+11%) and a 4% increase in 2025. International tourism is expected to grow 3% to 4% in 2026 compared to 2025, assuming that Asia and the Pacific continues to recover, global economic conditions remain favourable and geopolitical conflicts do not escalate. Uncertainty from current geopolitical tensions and conflicts pose an increasing risk for tourism in 2026.

As stated by UN Tourism, while headline inflation has receded globally in 2025, inflation in tourism-related services remains elevated by historical standards. Against this backdrop, tourists are expected to continue to seek value for money according to the Panel of Experts.

While positive prospects for the global economy and lower oil prices could favour tourism performance in 2026, uncertainty derived from geopolitical risks and ongoing conflicts, trade tensions and extreme weather events could weigh on traveller confidence.

International tourism in 2026 will be driven by solid consumer demand, enhanced air connectivity and growing outbound travel from emerging markets. Major international events such as the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics (Italy) and the FIFA World Cup 2026 (Canada, United States and Mexico) will also contribute to international travel.

Tourism is a dynamic and fast-growing sector that makes a substantial contribution to the global economy. It serves as a major engine for economic growth and development worldwide. In addition to its economic importance, the international tourism industry also plays a crucial role in promoting cultural interaction and supporting sustainable development.

The abundant historic, cultural, and natural heritage of OIC countries provides numerous opportunities to develop sustainable, ethical, and inclusive tourism, which is essential for social wellbeing and economic progress. Looking from that part, tourism sector ensures the well-being of the countries. In this context; OIC countries can further enhance their tourism sector by improving marketing strategies, and fostering international partnerships. Effective marketing campaigns can raise awareness of the unique attractions and experiences offered by OIC countries, attracting a broader range of tourists. (SESRIC).

### **COMCEC Tourism Cooperation**

COMCEC attaches utmost importance to develop the cooperation in tourism domain among the member countries. Regarding the importance of this issue, this study examines the impacts of climate change on OIC tourism and identifies key mitigation strategies to ensure long-term sustainability."

### **Impacts of Climate Change and Mitigation Strategies for Sustainable OIC Tourism**

Since the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the COMCEC, the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the COMCEC Tourism Working Group (TWG) was held on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026 in a virtual-only format, with the theme "Impacts of Climate Change and Mitigation Strategies for Sustainable OIC Tourism". A Research Report with the same theme is being prepared for two consecutive COMCEC TWG meetings (26<sup>st</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>).

While the first draft version of the Report was submitted to the 26<sup>st</sup> TWG meeting, the final version of the Report will be submitted to the 27<sup>th</sup> TWG meeting to be held on the September 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> 2026. The main objective of the study is to put forward policy recommendations on this special field in line with the existing problems and good practices by addressing the legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms and structures on climate change and mitigation strategies for sustainable OIC tourism. In this context, it is expected that the study will provide a road map that includes concrete studies and solution proposals that can be made in member countries regarding this special field.

The Report will also include solid and real case studies and success stories from the OIC member countries and non-OIC Countries to illustrate key concepts, implementation strategies, challenges encountered and found solutions as well as to reflect the current trends and insights on climate change and mitigation strategies.

This study is designed as a comprehensive analysis for OIC member countries, aimed at supporting businesses, governments, and tourism organizations in reducing the effects of climate change and implementing effective mitigation strategies to adapt to future changes in tourism markets and products.

The primary aim of this study is to assess how climate change affects tourism across OIC member countries and to formulate practical, evidence-based strategies for mitigation and adaptation that can support a transition toward more sustainable and climate-resilient tourism development. The research will focus on selected member countries, with particular attention to tourism assets and destinations that are especially exposed to climate-related risks, such as coastal resorts, small island destinations, mountainous regions, desert and arid landscapes, biodiversity-rich areas, and culturally important heritage sites.

The study is also expected to draw attention to current and future implications of climate change in tourism industry, the threats and opportunities for our countries, the future of tourism as a whole, various national and international tourism policies and tourism sector as a whole with a view to provide policy solutions. Furthermore, to increase its use and inform the beneficiary or target audience, to overcome any potential economic, financial, legal and administrative concerns and constraints, the roadmap will include benchmarks and recommended practices.

In addition, the study will consider environmentally sensitive natural areas, UNESCO-listed sites, and other locations where climate variability has a direct impact on tourism demand and long-term sustainability. Beyond evaluating current vulnerabilities, the research will incorporate forward-looking scenario analysis to examine how different climate trajectories could shape the future of the sector. This approach aims to provide policymakers and stakeholders with a range of informed policy options to navigate uncertainty effectively.

The first draft of the Report provides a conceptual framework on the importance of the climate change in the tourism sector; in the world as well as in the OIC region. The draft Report highlights the value of climate change and its significant effects on tourism sector. Therefore, a key objective of the study is to assess the vulnerability of OIC tourism sectors to climate change by analyzing the exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity of destinations across diverse geographies, cultures and tourism products. In light of the discussion during the meeting and with the active contribution of the member countries, the draft Report will be improved.

The first draft of the Report reveals important findings in terms of climate change for tourism sector in general as well as in the member case country study.

The final version of the Report is expected to evaluate the current status of climate change and mitigation strategies with a focus on OIC member countries and highlight the major challenges

faced by the OIC member countries, address the challenges and opportunities in the member countries and include sound, specific, and practical policy recommendations for climate change and mitigation strategies in line with sustainability in OIC tourism and its future in the OIC Member Countries.

The final version of the Research Report will be submitted to the 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Group which will be held on September 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

The reports and presentations submitted to the Working Group are available on the COMCEC web page. (<http://www.comcec.org/>)

### **The COMCEC Project Funding Mechanism**

COMCEC Project Funding (CPF) is the other important instrument of the Strategy. Projects financed under the CPF need to serve cooperation among member countries and must be designed in accordance with the objectives and the expected outcomes defined by the Strategy in the tourism section. Projects also play important roles in realization of the policy recommendations formulated by the member countries during the TWG meetings.

Within the scope of the 12<sup>th</sup> Call for Project Proposals, six projects were completed in 2025. These projects are as follows;

The project, titled “Capacity Building of Stakeholders through Experience Sharing in Agro tourism Practices”, was implemented by Burkina Faso with the partnership of Morocco. In this project, it was aimed at empowering the connection between agriculture and livestock farming with tourism, diversifying the range of tourist products, and enhancing the appeal of agro tourism destinations.

The project, titled “Strategic Planning and Marketing Strategies for the Promotion of Gastronomy Tourism”, was implemented by Bangladesh with the participation of Türkiye. This project aimed to create comprehensive strategic plans and effective marketing strategies to make Bangladesh as a leading gastronomic tourism destination.

The project, called “Empowering Sustainable Tourism: Integrating Blue, Green, Circular Economy into Tourism Operations”, was implemented by Indonesia with the partnership of Malaysia and Türkiye. This project focused on strengthening the competitive and sustainable tourism industry through promoting resource efficiency, waste management, renewable energy, and circular economy models.

The project, namely “Reimagining Islamic Heritage Tourism: Best Practices and Critical Success Factors”, was implemented by Malaysia with the partnership of four partners, namely Uzbekistan, Türkiye, Jordan and Mali. This project aimed to identify the critical factors behind the successful practices in Islamic heritage tourism and raise awareness among tourism stakeholders to strengthen recognition of Islamic heritage tourism.

The project, titled “Effective Management of Tourism Heritage Sites for Enhancing the Quality and Sustainability in Tourism”, was implemented by Uganda with the attendance of the

Gambia. This project focused on empowering the tourism economy by protecting heritage resources and values through equipping leading stakeholders in heritage tourism with effective and quality tourism management techniques.

The last project, called “Promoting Gastronomy Tourism for the Destination Senegal”, was implemented by SESRIC in partnership with Türkiye, Morocco, Senegal, Uzbekistan, Malaysia and Tunisia. This project aimed to create a strong brand identity for Senegal in gastronomy tourism by equipping relevant stakeholders with essential marketing and management skills and effective collaboration approaches.

Furthermore, with the 13<sup>th</sup> Call for Project Proposals under the CPF, seven projects have been selected for implementation in 2026. Along with a project of Maldives, which carried over from last year, a total of eight projects are as follows;

The first project, titled “Enhancing Cultural Heritage Site Preservation by Strengthening Governance and Monitoring Systems”, will be implemented by Bangladesh with the participation of Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Mali, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, SESRIC. The aim of project is to strengthen governance and monitoring systems in Bangladesh, based on best practices, necessary regulations, institutional improvements, and active stakeholder participation in the preservation of cultural heritage sites. In order to realize the mentioned purposes, a comprehensive workshop will be organized.

The second project, called “Strengthening Culinary Tourism of the Gambia through Enhancing the Capacity of Chefs/Cooks in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector”, will be implemented by the Gambia with the partnership of Türkiye. The project's purpose is to enhance the human and technical capabilities of chefs/cooks in Gambia's hospitality sector in terms of modern cooking techniques, menu development, food presentation, nutrition, hygiene, and compliance with food safety standards. Within this scope, a study visit will be organized in Türkiye to examine best practices on-site. Subsequently, a training program will be conducted with the participation of selected chefs and cooks.

The third project, titled “Strengthening and Branding Tourism Destinations in Indonesia with OIC/SMIIC Halal Standards”, will be implemented by Indonesia with the partnership of Malaysia, Türkiye, UAE and SMIIC. This project focuses on improving conformity assessment systems and strengthening quality infrastructure to ensure that Indonesia’s tourism ecosystem aligns with OIC/SMIIC standards. This project consists of two activities. A comprehensive study visit to Türkiye will be organized to provide an on-site experience with SMIIC halal standards. Then, a training on aligning national tourism practices with the halal concept will be held for participants from sector organizations in Indonesia.

The fourth project, namely “Enhancing Maldivian Gastronomy Tourism by Increasing the Recognition of Traditional Cuisine” to be implemented by Maldives, focuses on enhancing tourism competitiveness by promoting and branding Maldivian gastronomy through creating stronger links between tourism and local communities. Within the context of the project, a publicity meeting and the preparation of promotional materials will be conducted. The

promotional materials include the creation of high-quality, comprehensive books and videos reflecting Maldivian traditional cuisine, particularly focusing on culinary practices and cultural stories. In the publicity meeting, these materials, along with the Maldives Gastronomy Strategy, will be presented to key tourism stakeholders to enhance the branding of tourism in the gastronomy sector.

The fifth project, titled “Sustainable Tourism Villages Initiative: Empowering Communities and Enhancing Rural Visitor Experiences”, will be implemented by Uzbekistan with the cooperation of three partners, namely Türkiye, Indonesia and SESRIC. This project aims to promote sustainable, community-driven rural tourism by strengthening human capacity, improving village standards, and diversifying visitor experiences. To accomplish this, a study visit will be conducted in Türkiye to examine tourism villages in terms of community-based tourism, the role of local stakeholders, and institutional structures. Then, a workshop will be organized in Uzbekistan, and a tourism village model guide will be produced.

The sixth project, titled “Strengthening Uganda’s Culinary Tourism through Skills Development”, will be implemented by Uganda with the cooperation of Egypt. This project aims to enhance the skills of chefs, culinary school students/staff, and relevant other stakeholders in areas such as cooking and food presentation techniques, food safety and hygiene standards, menu development suitable for tourism markets, and customer-centric service delivery. In this respect, a study visit will be organized to Egypt to examine the country's gastronomy tourism ecosystem first-hand. Based on the experiences gained from the ground, a training program will be conducted with the attendance of sector participants.

The other project, titled “Capacity Building of Tourism Stakeholders with OIC/SMIIC Halal Restaurant and Tourism Services Standards”, will be implemented by SMIIC in partnership with seven OIC member countries, namely Egypt, Malaysia, Morocco, Uzbekistan, Senegal, Jordan and Lebanon. This project aims to enhance the compliance of accommodation establishments with OIC/SMIIC 6 (Halal Restaurants) and OIC/SMIIC 9 (Halal Tourism Services) standards in their service delivery. Within this scope, tailored training programs will be delivered in each participating country to build the capacity of tourism destination stakeholders, such as restaurants, hotels, and accommodation associations, on SMIIC halal standards and their practical application.

The last project, titled “Strengthening Egypt’s Cultural Tourism Destination Brand through Sharing Experiences”, will be implemented by SESRIC in partnership with Egypt, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Malaysia and Senegal. This project aims to promote Egypt as a heritage tourism destination by enhancing visitor experience, cultural visibility, empowering local communities, and utilising digital innovation. In this context, with the participation of experts from relevant sectors of prominent Islamic countries in the field of cultural heritage tourism, a training and a workshop will be held to achieve these objectives. And after, a roadmap will be developed for the preservation of cultural heritage and the branding of destinations in this field in Islamic countries.

### **Other Ongoing Activities**

Other important activities carried out under tourism cooperation can be summarized as follows:

- The 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum was held on October 8, 2025, with the theme “*Tourism and Rural Development in OIC Countries*”. The Forum gathered many public and private sector representatives from Member Countries.

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