



Executive Council

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Thematic discussion: follow-up of the T20 meeting on visa and travel facilitation

I. Introduction

1. Following the interest expressed by the Members during the 93rd session to include in the agenda of the Council meetings a more comprehensive debate on key issues of central relevance for tourism policy and development, the 94th session includes a thematic discussion on visa and other travel facilitation measures.
2. Visas and the existing procedures to obtain them constitute today important barriers to the expansion of tourism in many regions and destinations. The issue was the central focus of the 4th T20 Ministers' Meeting (Mexico, May 2012), where significant strides were made in achieving a consensus on the need to balance security and economic growth and support measures that facilitate visas and thus stimulate travel and tourism.
3. The work of the T20, under the chairmanship of Mexico, culminated with the historic inclusion of tourism for the first time in a Declaration of the G20 Leaders. Furthermore, besides recognizing the role of tourism as "a vehicle for job creation, economic growth and development", the Leaders of the G20 expressed a commitment to work towards "developing travel facilitation initiatives in support of job creation, quality work, poverty reduction and global growth".
4. According to research by UNWTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), simple visa facilitation processes in the G20 economies could lead to 102 million additional international arrivals, generate US\$ 206 billion in tourism receipts and create as many as 5.1 million jobs in the G20 economies up to 2015 (full report in Annex I).
5. The issue of visa facilitation is also being addressed in the scope of other organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with which UNWTO is closely collaborating (see document 3(b) for reference).

II. Issues for debate

6. The thematic discussion will be organized as follows:



- (a) Introductory remarks by the Secretary-General (5 minutes)
- (b) Introductory remarks by the Minister of Tourism of Mexico, Chairman of the 4th T20 Ministers Meeting (10 minutes)
- (c) Interactive debate focused on:
 - i. National experiences: major barriers and opportunities (assessment of current situation; percentage of source markets needing visas; procedures to require, process and grant visas as well as main trends and challenges)
 - ii. Current and future opportunities for regional cooperation (APEC, ASEAN and other)
 - iii. Global opportunities to advance visa facilitation and proposed actions by the Secretariat (research, recommendations, cooperation with other international organizations, and others)
 - iv. Next steps

(Delegations are kindly requested to take note of the points in 6(c) and prepare their participation accordingly).

III. Actions to be taken by the Executive Council

- 7. The Executive Council is requested:
 - (a) To acknowledge the outcome of the 4th T20 Ministers' Meeting; and
 - (b) To provide the Secretariat with guidance on the actions to undertake in the issue of visa and travel facilitation.