



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

INFORMAL REPORT OF THE VIDEO-MEETING AMONG HIGH-LEVEL DIGNITARIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON COOPERATION IN TOURISM FROM INTERESTED BSEC MEMBER STATES

11 June 2020

1. In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the first video-meeting among high-level dignitaries of the Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism from interested BSEC Member States was held online on 11 June 2020 upon the initiative of the BSEC PERMIS.

2. The Meeting was opened by Mr. Mircea LAZAR, Minister Counsellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Representative of the Romanian Chairmanship-in-Office, who expressed appreciation to the BSEC PERMIS for its efforts in organizing this very timely video-meeting, and underlined the importance of sharing experiences and lessons learned between the Member States in the field of Tourism, considering the current very unfavourable circumstances.

3. In his welcoming address the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES stressed the importance of effective cooperation, both regionally and internationally, given that the Coronavirus pandemic has created huge problems for the once very dynamic Tourism industry. He proposed to the participants considering the promotion of a new cooperation platform with the aim of agreeing on concrete joint measures and actions, which will enable the safe and gradual reopening of Tourism flows between BSEC Member States and invited them to arrive at concrete and tangible results in that direction.

4. The video-meeting was attended by representatives from the following BSEC Member States:

1. Republic of Albania
2. Republic of Azerbaijan
3. Republic of Bulgaria
4. Georgia
5. Hellenic Republic
6. Republic of Moldova
7. Romania
8. Russian Federation
9. Republic of Serbia
10. Republic of Turkey
11. Ukraine

5. Representatives from the UN *World Tourism Organization* (UNWTO), a BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partner, also participated the Meeting.

6. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex I**.

SESSION I: CORONAVIRUS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

7. Under the first discussion point, a thorough exchange of views took place among all participants, in the context of the current crisis and its consequences.

8. Mr. Beka JAKELI, Chief of Member Relations, UNWTO, gave a broad overview of the current situation in the Tourism sector and presented three different scenarios/forecasts for the remaining half of the year 2020. He briefed on the major initiatives and activities undertaken by the Organization and informed about their recently released report on “*Priorities for Tourism Recovery*”, which outlines the roadmap and priorities of the sector in the coming challenging period, and on the “*Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism*”, that provides a comprehensive set of measures designed to help open up Tourism in a safe, seamless and responsible manner.

9. The high-level dignitaries from the Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism from **Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Hellenic Republic, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine** discussed the grave impact of Covid-19 and the heavy restrictions on movement and travel imposed in the wake of the Coronavirus outbreak that brought the whole World to a standstill. They exchanged views and good practices in combating the pandemic and mitigating its negative impact on Tourism; they also discussed strategies and measures adopted by each country in their effort to support stakeholders in the Tourism industry and, thus, enable the gradual easing of restrictive measures and the smooth transition to a new tourism norm.

SESSION II: “TRAVELING IN THE NEW NORMAL”

10. Participants exchanged views and discussed proposals and requirements concerning the travel-industry in the post-pandemic era of the “*New Normality*”.

11. Mr. Peter JANECH, Senior Officer, Regional Depart. for Europe, UNWTO, delivered a comprehensive presentation entitled “*Travelling in the New Normal*”, underlining some of the most important principles:

- Safe and seamless travel for residents, travellers & workers in full respect of health regulations;
- Clear and evidence-based protocols & information;
- Data sharing on the basis of consent & applicable regulations, and in full respect of data privacy policies;
- Nondiscrimination of travelers;
- Digital transformation;
- Measures should be in place only as long as necessary with respective protocols to be replaced with better alternatives or removed as the situation allows.

12. Moreover, he put forward some ideas as “*Fruit for Thought*” for the elaboration of “*Potential BSEC Coronavirus Protocols*”.

13. Given that almost all Member States have successfully curbed the spread of COVID-19 and are progressively lifting the lockdown, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General proposed that appropriate measures and actions be considered to gradually relaunch Tourism between Member States for the remaining half of 2020. To that end, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES invited the participants to consider the possibilities of promoting among the

interested Member States a joint platform – “BSEC Coronavirus Protocols”, which would refer to common parameters to be agreed upon, in order to facilitate the gradual flow of Tourism between the Member States.

14. The participants expressed an initial interest in considering the promotion of the above-mentioned platform, which would allow the safe and gradual reopening of Tourism among the BSEC Member States.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE VIDEO-MEETING

15. Participants had the opportunity to discuss issues on how to alleviate the difficulties created by the Coronavirus pandemic. They underlined the need for international and regional cooperation to reduce the negative impacts of COVID-19 as essential.

16. In order to achieve tangible results and agree on a possible concrete framework of further BSEC actions, participants decided to continue the discussion through PERMIS and organize another meeting, if deemed necessary.

17. Considering the above, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General concretely proposed the following:

- The BSEC PERMIS will distribute to all Member States the presentation made by UNWTO, in which most of the discussed suggestions and proposed measures are included (**attached as Annex II**).

- The BSEC PERMIS will officially ask all Member States to confirm whether they want to work on establishing a BSEC platform for the promotion of Tourism in the post-pandemic period and will prepare a first draft roadmap for deliberations and coordination among the Member States, in order to agree on a concrete framework of measures and actions to be introduced between them, thus allowing for the safe and gradual renewal of Tourism flows.

**VIDEO-MEETING
AMONG HIGH-LEVEL DIGNITARIES
FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON COOPERATION IN TOURISM
OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES**

12 June 2020, 11:00 (*Istanbul time*)

– LIST OF PARTICIPANTS –

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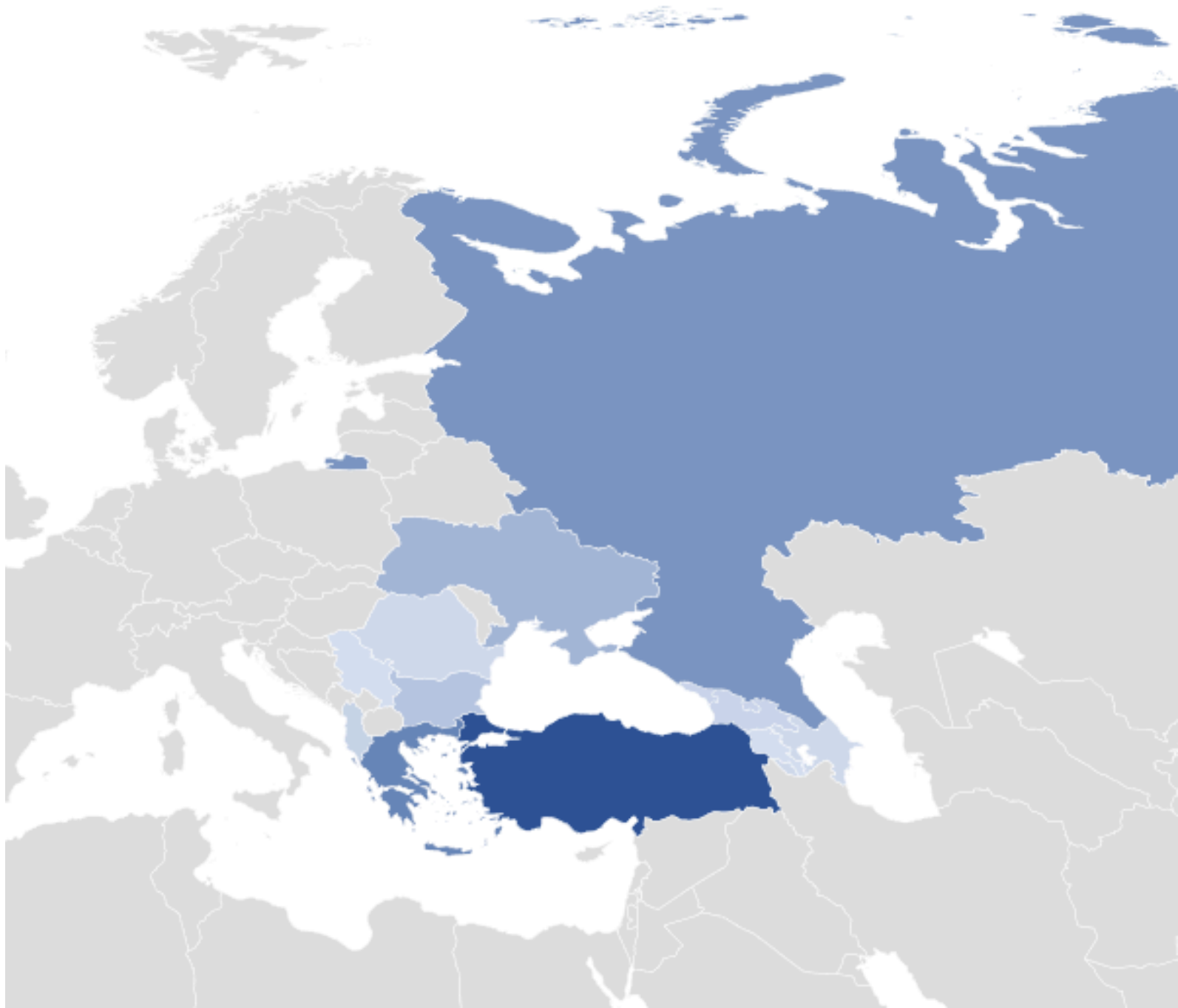
SESSION II **“TRAVELLING IN THE NEW NORMAL”**

**BSEC Virtual Working Group on Tourism
(11 June 2020)**



Selected BSEC Member States Data: International Tourist Arrivals (2020 Q1/March*)

COUNTRY	ARRIVALS (Q1 %)	March (%)
Azerbaijan	-14,9	-62,8
Bulgaria	-10,5	-43,7
Georgia	-13,2	-56,1
Greece	Jan -8,5	Feb +24,6
Romania	Jan -8,7	Feb -10,2
Turkey	-22,2	-67,9
Europe	-19,1	



* Source: UNWTO Barometer May 2020

Travelling in the new normal

- **International travel could only resume once the borders are re-opened**
- However, the complete or partial closure of borders continue to be the most dominant type of travel restriction across regions nowadays. This measure is applied in **93% of destinations in Europe.**
- As of today, each and every of the 12 BSEC Member States are having some type of travel restriction or ban in place (*Source: 4th UNWTO Report on Travel Restrictions).
- UNWTO stresses the need for vigilance, responsibility and international and regional cooperation as the world slowly opens up again.

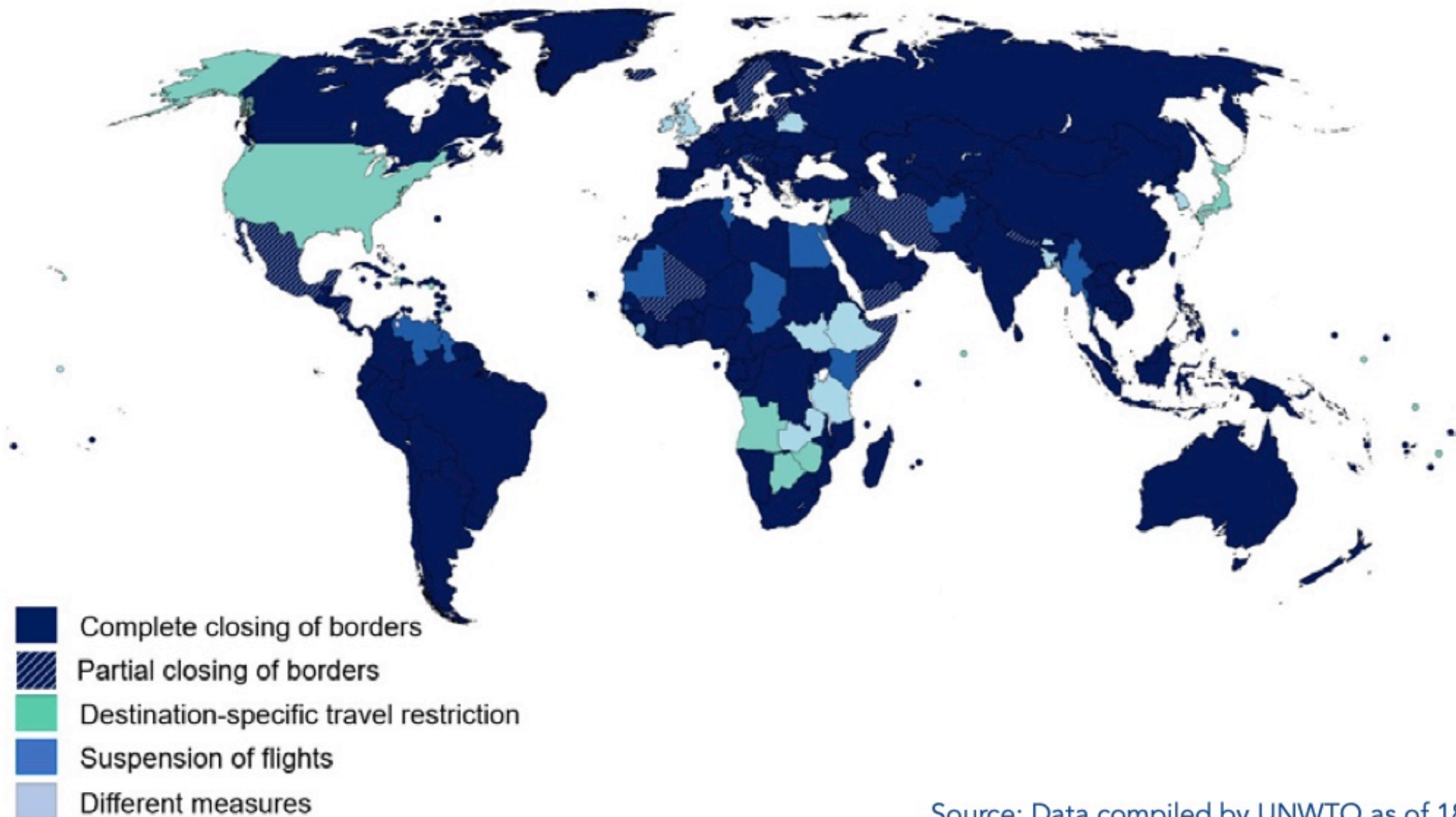


COVID – 19
RELATED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS
A GLOBAL REVIEW FOR TOURISM

FOURTH REPORT AS OF 29 MAY 2020



Figure A – Type of travel restriction by destination with COVID-19 travel restrictions



Source: Data compiled by UNWTO as of 18 May¹.

The background of the cover is a photograph of a modern building with a large, curved glass facade. The building's interior is visible through the glass, showing rows of empty seats. The overall color palette is dark and blue-toned.

UNWTO

**PRIORITIES FOR
TOURISM
RECOVERY**

28 MAY 2020

The background of the cover is a photograph of a person standing on a rocky outcrop, looking out over a lake and mountains. The person is wearing a winter hat and a backpack. The overall color palette is dark and blue-toned.

UNWTO

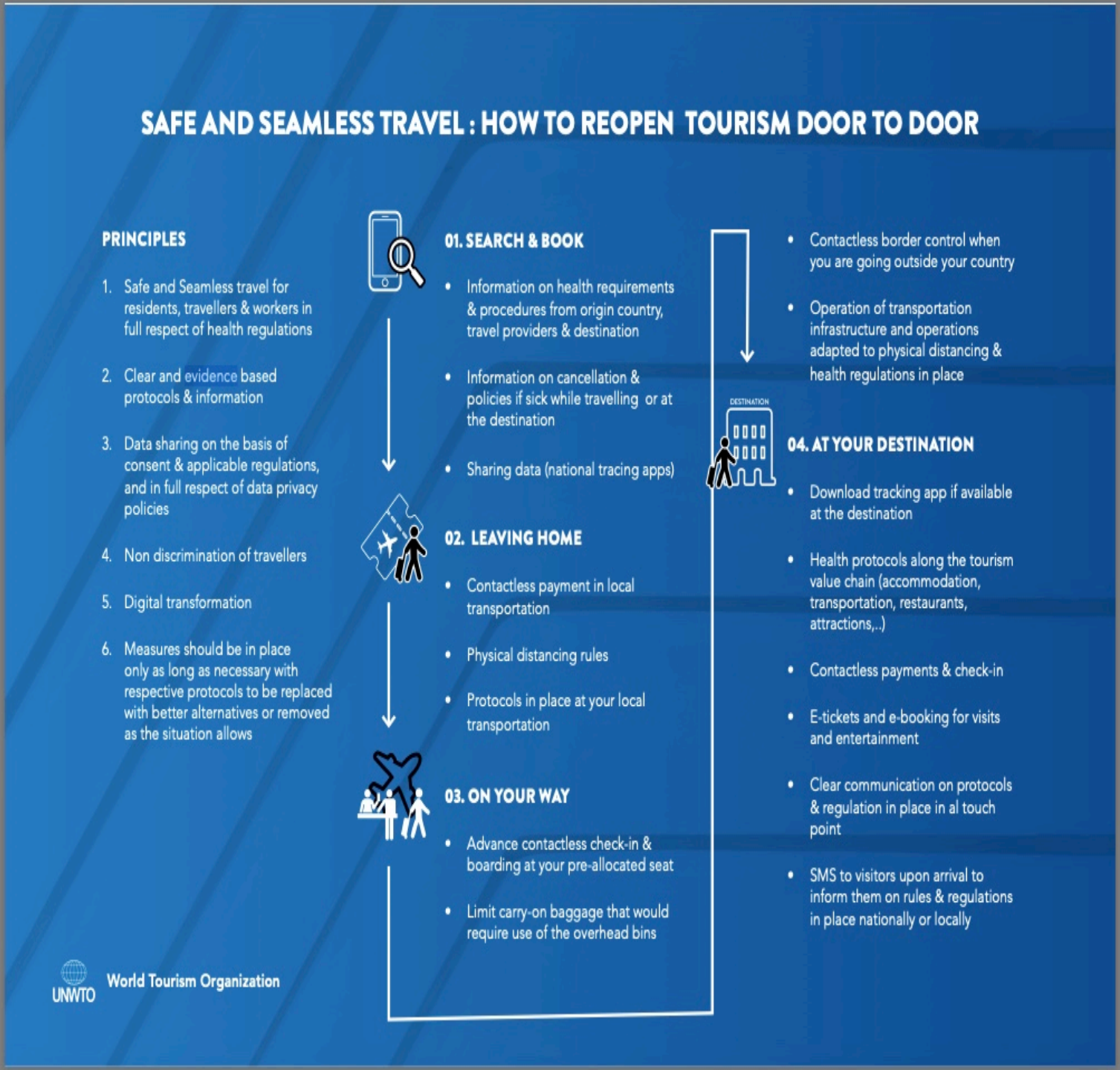
**GLOBAL
GUIDELINES
TO RESTART
TOURISM**

28 MAY 2020



Principles:

1. Safe and Seamless travel for residents, travellers & workers in full respect of health regulations;
2. Clear and evidence-based protocols & information;
3. Data sharing on the basis of consent & applicable regulations, and in full respect of data privacy policies;
4. Non discrimination of travellers;
5. Digital transformation;
6. Measures should be in place only as long as necessary with respective protocols to be replaced with better alternatives or removed as the situation allows.





ONE PLANET VISION FOR A RESPONSIBLE RECOVERY OF THE TOURISM SECTOR



Looking ahead: Sustainability is the new normal

The vision recommends six lines of action to guide a responsible tourism recovery for **PEOPLE**, **PLANET** and **PROSPERITY** namely *public health, social inclusion, biodiversity conservation, climate action, circular economy and governance and finance*

#ResponsibleRecovery for People:

- Public health
- Social inclusion

#ResponsibleRecovery for Planet:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Climate action

#ResponsibleRecovery for Prosperity:

- Circular economy
- Governance and finance

Fruit for thought for a potential “BSEC Coronavirus Protocols”

- Use and consider **best practices** (*you don't need to invent something new*);
- **Graduality** as a principle;
- **Working together** (horizontally: *national-regional-local authorities / vertically: along the tourism supply chain/tourism ecosystem*), **coordination** between origin and destination countries;
- Analyses of the **epidemiological situation**;
- Establishment of necessary **health and safety protocols** (among others: physical distancing, hygiene), testing capacity;
- Use of **digital technologies/digital transition**:
 - The crucial role of digital technologies and data in fighting the pandemic;
 - Mobile applications could bolster contact-tracing strategies (monitoring and surveillance);
- Preparation of **communication strategies** (within the country and with other countries):
 - Confidence building measures
 - Marketing campaigns
- **Training** and management of staff.



Thank you for your attention!

Peter Janech, Senior Officer
Regional Department for Europe

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