

versione italiana

[LAS VEGAS]

The first data have been released, and they do not look good. On March 6, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) published a statement with some predictions related to the effects of COVID-19 on the travel market. UNWTO has revised its 2020 prospects for international tourist arrivals to a negative growth of 1% to 3%, translating into an estimated loss of US\$ 30 to 50 billion in international tourism receipts.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, UNWTO predicted a positive growth of 3% to 4% for this year. This first assessment expects that Asia and the Pacific will be the worst affected region, with an anticipated fall in arrivals of 9% to 12%. Estimates for other world regions are currently premature in view of the rapidly evolving situation. UNWTO underscores that any estimate must be treated with caution and is likely to be updated.

Although UNWTO underlines that these data must be treated with caution and will probably be updated, one cannot help but think of our country, Italy. A quick look at the news is enough to understand the tragic situation of those who work in the tourism industry. Recently, Confturismo-Confcommercio predicted a 31 million loss in the next three months in terms of tourism presences, which is equivalent to more than seven billion euros.

In this sense, the words of Zurab Pololikashvili, UNWTO's Secretary General, are important: *small and medium sized enterprises make up around 80% of the tourism sector and are particularly exposed with millions of livelihoods across the world, including within vulnerable communities, relying on tourism.*

In such a difficult situation, UNWTO highlights the importance of supporting the recovery, from every point of view, especially taking into account that tourism affects several other sectors. Having an important social impact, tourism has a unique role in helping communities in terms of recovery and stability.

Over the years, the industry has consistently demonstrated the ability not only to recover as a sector, but to be able to drive a wider economic and social recovery. And this is where institutions come into play, as UNWTO explains that this depends on adequate political support and recognition.



“This is not China, This is not Wuhan This was Milan in Italy today The new Ghost Town. #coronavirustalla”
[khavar Ali @Khavar786Ali]

The steps in this sense are three. Firstly, it is important to focus on financial and political support

for recovery measures targeting the tourism sector in the most affected countries. Secondly, recovery measures and incentives have to be planned and implemented in coordination with international development and donor organizations. Finally, tourism support has to be included in the wider recovery plans and actions of affected economies.

Furthermore, UNWTO underlines the importance of traveling responsibly. Institutions, in fact, are not the only ones that have to take action. As the UN agency explains, individual travelers' behaviors are also fundamental.

Personal responsibility is the most important step that people can take to protect themselves and others. Travelers should familiarize themselves with the basic prevention practices that apply while travelling and in daily life.

It is vital, at this point, to be updated through media or other kinds of official communications. As the statement explains,

It is essential to stay informed as the situation evolves, especially while travelling. Travelers should check regularly with WHO and other reliable resources for the latest updates and information issued by health and travel professionals. Travelers are responsible not only for their own well-being but for the well-being of those around them. They should be aware of the symptoms and take all the recommended steps for personal hygiene.

For those who are part of countries like Italy, where tourism is fundamental, it is not easy to read this kind of news. We have to keep in mind that UNWTO declares that tourism is one of the most affected sectors by the threat of COVID-19. The solution, therefore, seems to be the collaboration between all the subjects involved. What we need to ask ourselves, sociologically, is how to convey the importance of cooperating to everyone.



"View from the top of the Spanish Steps this evening. Rome a near ghost town #coronavirus" [James Mates @jamesmatesitv]

UNWTO underlines it will provide guidance and support for recovery to its members, both from the private and public sectors, including organizers of tourism events and fairs. The UN agency explains that any information will be published both on the website and on social media. The goal is to reach the greatest number of people, travelers above all. It is interesting to note how, in such a difficult moment, UNWTO is trying to fill any gaps in communication. Because the imperative, right now, is that COVID-19 cannot be defeated without everyone's collaboration.

Cover image: "My flight from London to Houston today. Practically empty. #coronavirus #COVID19 #CoronavirusOutbreak #Travel #tourism" [Ken Hoffman@KenCultureMap]