



SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW  
GROUP (SIRG)  
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PRESENTATION BY THE XXV INTER-AMERICAN CONGRESS OF MINISTERS  
AND HIGH-LEVEL AUTHORITIES OF TOURISM

(Minister Raul Martinez, Interim Representative of Paraguay to the OAS)

As you are aware, the 25<sup>th</sup> Inter-American Congress of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Tourism took place virtually on October 6, 2021 and was organized jointly with Paraguay's National Tourism Secretariat.

The XXV Congress was held under the slogan "Toward the Reconstruction and Reactivation of Tourism Post COVID-19" and its subtopics included strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19 on tourism, and tourism post COVID-19.

The first subtopic underscored the importance of examining and sharing public policies adopted to address the crisis and propose joint measures to reactivate the travel and tourism sector in the Americas in a safe, sustainable fashion.

The second subtopic, tourism post COVID-19, moved beyond strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic on the tourism sector and emphasized the importance of considering how best to rebuild post-COVID tourism.

Mr. Chair, the 25<sup>th</sup> Congress provided a time and place to continue the regional dialog and cooperation on tourism. In the early days of March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic. In a few months, virtually all tourism destinations in the world had restricted movement and travel, and by the end of the year, many global destinations had completely closed their borders to international tourism. This triggered the worst crisis in the travel and tourism sector since World War II.

Given this scenario, the Inter-American Commission on Tourism (CITUR) organized two meetings in 2020—a special meeting in August and a regular meeting in November—to offer member states a forum to examine the nature and cost of the pandemic's impact on the tourism sector, and the protocols and strategies used to ensure that the sector can continue to operate during the pandemic, among other things. Additional meetings in 2021 further assessed the situation in the member states and the progress made by the four CITUR Working Groups established in 2020.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Congress made headway in the discussions of those previous meetings and explored opportunities for cooperation and common action. By focusing on tourism post COVID-19, the dialog underlined the importance of sustainability, including the need for tourism to be profitable if it is to survive. Another key outcome of the 25<sup>th</sup> Congress was the approval and adoption of the Paraguay Declaration.

While recognizing the importance of coordinating efforts among countries to generate resilience in the tourism sector and restore confidence among travelers, the Paraguay Declaration called for the preparation of a flexible recovery action plan to guide this process including, among other things, standardized protocols on biosafety, sustainable tourism, climate change, considerations for tourism communities, public-private partnerships, and support for tourism SMEs.

The Declaration also instructed the General Secretariat to continue consolidating the Indigenous Tourism Dialog in the Americas. This dialog emerged from the Indigenous Tourism Forum of the Americas held virtually in the fall of 2020, and represents a network of leaders of indigenous peoples, public and private sector tourism organizations and civil society. It promotes the sustainable development of indigenous communities throughout the Americas. It also reflects the collective efforts of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, the United States Department of the Interior, and the George Washington International Institute of Tourism Studies, to strengthen indigenous tourism and its benefits for those communities.

Mr. Chair, the Congress was attended by participants from 28 member states plus one country with permanent observer status, representatives of the private sector, regional and international tourism organizations, and academic institutions. This reflects the vast reach of the tourism sector and the need to include a diversity of voices in the search for solutions to the challenges facing the sector.

I must also point out that the XXV Congress accepted the kind offer of the Ecuadorian delegation to host the XXVI Inter-American Congress of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Tourism in 2024.

As a result of the XXV Congress, one of the immediate next steps will be the adoption of the CITUR Work Plan at the next Planning Meeting of the CITUR Authorities.

In conclusion, I must say that the Paraguay Declaration includes several key mandates and areas of action consistent with some of the proposals in the Draft Political Commitments for the Ninth Summit of the Americas and the Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas.

While recognizing the importance of coordinating actions among countries to generate resilience in the tourism sector and restore confidence among travelers, the Paraguay Declaration called for preparing a flexible action plan to guide the recovery process. The ministers and high-level authorities visualized a multidimensional recovery plan to include, among other things, standardized protocols on biosafety, sustainable tourism, climate change, tourism communities, public-private partnerships, and support for tourism SMEs. This is consistent with the proposal on Health and Resilience in the Americas to contain an Action Plan that includes, but is not limited to, identifying joint national and international measures to promote the harmonization and convergence of regulations governing health systems in the Americas to provide effective health services that reach our populations, especially those that are vulnerable and historically marginalized.

Similarly, the Paraguay Declaration stresses the importance of continuing to work in the areas of CITUR's four specialized Working Groups. The proposed Draft Political Commitments for the Ninth Summit of the Americas on disseminating and implementing national adaptation plans or strategies that promote resilience and include climate risks in plans, policies, operations and sectoral budgets to generate resilience in all sectors, broadly encompasses the objectives of the CITUR Working Groups. This is especially the case of the Working Groups on Developing a 2050 Tourism Agenda for the Americas and on Climate Change and Sustainable Tourism Development in the Americas.