I. Background

Over the last decades, urban areas have been rapidly transforming and their populations have grown remarkably. According to the United Nations, in 1990, 43% of the world’s population lived in urban areas; by 2015, this share had grown to 54% and is expected to reach 60% by 2030.

Alongside rapid urbanization, the growth of the tourism sector led by more affordable transport costs, youth mobility, travel facilitation and a growing middle class, made cities increasingly popular destinations for business and leisure tourists.

Today, the income generated from both domestic and international tourism contributes significantly to the socio-economic and cultural development of many cities and its surroundings. Yet, the growth of urban tourism also creates important challenges in terms of the use of natural resources, socio-cultural impact, pressure on infrastructure, mobility, congestion management and relationship with host communities. Tourism policies should thus be designed as integrated urban policies that promote a well-balanced city economically, socially and environmentally.

Considering that tourism can contribute significantly to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and namely Goal 11 ‘Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Ministry of Economy of Portugal and the Lisbon Municipality are co-organizing the first UNWTO Mayors Forum for Sustainable Urban Tourism in Lisbon, Portugal on the 5 April 2019.

The UNWTO Mayors Forum for Sustainable Urban Tourism is an initiative to bring together Mayors, Ministers of Tourism and relevant companies and organizations from around the world who share a visionary leadership aimed at creating cities for all.

In a time of intense debate over the growing number of tourists and the livability and sustainability of cities, it is essential that all stakeholders – residents, visitors, local, regional and national authorities and private sector – work together to respond to the current and upcoming challenges.

Smart cities hold an enormous potential to generate a positive impact on the citizens’ lives and the visitors’ experiences by making cities more livable, manageable and accessible. Creating policies and tools that provide guidance to the sector on how to more effectively develop and manage urban destinations is crucial to the long-term sustainability and development of the tourism sector and urban settings.
II. Objectives

The Forum will discuss issues and solutions for developing and managing tourism in cities in a way that promotes economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability through the:

- exchange of ideas and best practices in urban tourism and destination management by bringing together a wide-range of public and private sector stakeholders involved in the planning and management of cities;

- discussion of innovative tools and public policies on urban tourism at the national and local levels;

- promoting the integration of tourism into wider national and local urban development agenda;

- set recommendations for better policies and governance of urban tourism;

- call to action reaffirming the commitment of governments and stakeholders to work towards building inclusive and sustainable cities for all

The Forum will address questions such as:

- How can tourism effectively support the New Urban Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs, namely SDG 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”?

- How to ensure urban tourism prompts benefits for local communities and improves the quality of life of its citizens while preserving authenticity?

- How to engage and build awareness among local communities of the benefits of urban tourism beyond stereotypes?

- How to maximize the use of big data and technology to better plan, measure and manage urban tourism?

- What is the impact of new platform tourism services on cities and how to adjust the policy frameworks?

- How to plan and manage shared resources – mobility and carrying capacity?