

*(Video-meeting, November 25, 2021*

*14:00*

Dear colleagues!

I would like to highlight the Norwegian presidency this year and thank you for the work done, which outlines important issues of tourism development, such as stimulating competitiveness of the Barents tourism sector, inspiring to innovate more in tourism products, enhancing tourism quality and others.

I am upset that again we were not able to meet this year at the Working Group Tourism Meeting in Norway. I hope the situation will change soon and we will see each other in person in the near future.

COVID-19 has certainly become a serious and unprecedented crisis for the entire world. And now, almost two years later, when we are all on the road to returning to the life we used to live before the pandemic, it is important to support the tourism sector, which has become one of the most affected industries.

I think you will all agree that in the current reality, the priority for all states is to ensure, first of all, safe and comfortable travel of their citizens. Countries are gradually removing entry restrictions on their territories, but there is no doubt that this process should assume safe entry conditions. Tourists should be confident that when resuming their trips in the post-COVID period, they will feel safe, without any health risks.

This spring the Government of the Russian Federation approved the national project called "Tourism and the Hospitality Industry", created in order to implement measures of state support for the tourism industry. The national project is aimed at the development of tourist infrastructure, increasing the availability of domestic tourism and improving management in this area. As part of the national project, we plan to allocate funds to the regions for the improvement of city centers, the construction of hotel complexes, to give investors cheap loans for the construction of tourist infrastructure, to allocate grants for the arrangement of tourist routes, the creation of campsites and other prefabricated accommodation facilities, as well as subsidize tourist trips through cashback programs, charters, and other measures.

Also, Russian Federation pays a special attention to the touristic potential of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.

The Arctic is one of the most unique and, at the same time, inaccessible regions of the world. For those who live in the spirit of the pioneer, and who are really ready for discoveries, the Arctic provides unique opportunities. Perhaps it is through the Arctic that we can show the world Russia as a country of great tourist discoveries.

We have introduced a polar tourist passport, in which with the help of unique seals it will be possible to capture visits to the most interesting sights of the Arctic zone, as well as Moscow and St. Petersburg dedicated to the Arctic.

From 2021 to 2023, the Russian Federation will chair the Arctic Council, an international organization that unites the efforts of circumpolar states to achieve sustainable development of the circumpolar territories and for cooperation in the field of environmental protection.

In order to show all the beauty of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and the state's commitment to the idea of sustainable tourism, a number of events are planned within the framework of the chairmanship:

- Conference on Sustainable cruise tourism in the Arctic;
- International Festival "Bering Strait";
- Conference on International Cooperation in the Implementation of Tourist Activities in the Arctic;
- Annual forum "Accessible Arctic".

We will also learn from the positive experience of other countries in the Arctic region, and in general, trends in the development of eco-tourism in the world.

Taking into account the focus on the development of cruise tourism in the Arctic, we are working on creating attractive investment tools to create a high-class tourist infrastructure in the Arctic. Our efforts are aimed at eliminating the problems associated with the lack of long-term credit instruments available to investors with interest rates that allow them to recoup investments in tourist and recreational facilities and in funds that ensure the functioning of the tourism sector, including cruise ships, small and pleasure craft in a time acceptable to investors.

Thus, comprehensive work is being carried out to develop tourism in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, which is important for the state for a number of social and economic political reasons.

We hope that the measures we are taking will make it possible to fully simplify the entry into our country and attract even more foreign tourists.