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Global Wellness Institute Teams with UNWTO to Bring Wellness Tourism Increased Recognition

As an Affiliate Member of the UNWTO, the Global Wellness Institute will jointly work on implementing wellness tourism projects

New York, NY – December 3, 2014 – The Global Wellness Institute (GWI), an international think-tank that develops research and resources to positively impact the global wellness industry, signed an agreement with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) of the United Nations, to jointly implement projects that address the role wellness tourism can play in helping increase tourism overall. The memorandum of understanding was co-signed by Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the UNWTO, and Susie Ellis, Chairman and CEO of the GWI, during London's World Travel Market. According to recent [GWI research](#)¹, wellness tourism is worth over \$494 billion and it grew almost twice as fast as global tourism overall in the last year.

"We are following with great interest the evolution of wellness tourism and look forward to working closely with the GWI on initiatives that will allow our Member States to develop this important segment," said the UNWTO's Secretary-General.

During the signing of the agreement, Ellis commented that the GWI is in full alignment with the UNWTO's mandate of promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and peace through tourism, stating: "This concept is a natural fit with the worlds of spa and wellness simply because these activities bring people and communities together in unique and therapeutic ways."

One of the key focuses of the affiliation is to strategize and make recommendations about how wellness tourism can be effective in overcoming seasonality. Earlier this year, Ellis presented at the first UNWTO conference focusing on this issue, held in Uruguay.

"Wellness offerings are a natural and creative way to attract more business during 'low' season," said Ellis. "There are great examples of countries and regions that have already implemented wellness campaigns to buck seasonality trends."

Ellis cites Kerala, India's 'The Land of Ayurveda' campaign, which was created to drive more travel during the traditional downturn of the monsoon season by promoting Ayurveda practices of the region and has resulted in double-digit tourism growth and a huge increase in lengths of stay. Another example is the transformation of Austria's Tirol region from a single season, ski-only destination to a year-round wellness destination dubbed "Tirol Wellness."

¹ Global Spa & Wellness Economy Monitor, 2014

Other projects that the two parties will cooperate on include defining standards for wellness tourism, research, and clarifying the differences between wellness tourism and medical tourism.

As a UNWTO Affiliate Member, GWI is part of a global network of more than 400 private tourism companies, non-governmental organizations, destinations and academic entities, contributing to knowledge and expertise to promote the development of responsible, sustainable and accessible tourism. GWI can benefit from a wide range of public-private collaboration opportunities, including a powerful platform to connect with governments around the world, and the opportunity to join UNWTO work on the promotion of responsible and sustainable tourism.

To learn more about the Global Wellness Institute, visit:

www.globalwellnessinstitute.com

About the Institute: The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) is an international think-tank that brings together leaders and visionaries from private and public sectors to positively impact and shape the future of the wellness industry. The GWI is the umbrella organization that runs both the Global Spa & Wellness Summit (GSWS) and the Global Wellness Tourism Congress (GWTC). The GWI is considered the leading global research and educational resource for the \$3.4 trillion spa and wellness industry. WellnessEvidence.com, the world's first online portal to the medical evidence for common wellness approaches, is also a GWI initiative.

About UNWTO: The World Tourism Organization ([UNWTO](http://www.unwto.org)), a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 156 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 400 Affiliate Members.