THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON WORLD TOURISM DAY

27 September 2012

The Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development emphasized that well-designed and well-managed tourism can make a significant contribution to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. One of the world’s largest economic sectors, tourism is especially well-placed to promote environmental sustainability, green growth and our struggle against climate change through its relationship with energy.

“Tourism and Sustainable Energy: Powering Sustainable Development” is the theme of this year’s World Tourism Day, selected to advance the goals of the 2012 International Year of Sustainable Energy for All. Hundreds of millions of people around the world depend for income on this energy-intensive sector. Sustainable energy will allow tourism to continue to expand while mitigating its impact on the environment.

Many in the tourism industry have already shown leadership in developing and deploying clean energy solutions, cutting energy consumption and carbon emissions in some regions by up to 40 per cent through initiatives such as the Hotel Energy Solutions toolkit developed by the UN World Tourism Organization and the UN Environment Programme. Other concrete advances include the growing use of energy-efficient fuels in air travel, sustainable procurement strategies and increasingly popular carbon offsetting schemes.

Everyone has a role in sustainable tourism. I commend the tourism community for its growing commitment to sustainable energy. I also thank the tourists who play their part by off-setting their own carbon emissions, choosing ecologically friendly destinations and providers, or simply by postponing having their towels laundered. Every action counts. This year, one billion international tourists will travel to foreign destinations. Imagine what one act multiplied by one billion can do.

On this World Tourism Day, I appeal to all who work in and enjoy the benefits of this global sector to join in building a more sustainable future for all.