



Troisièmes Rencontres Parlementaires sur le Tourisme: Et si le redressement passait par le tourisme ?

(what if tourism would be part of the solution for the economic recovery?)

UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai

Mme Carole Delga, State Secretary for Trade, Crafts, Consumer Affairs and for Social and Solidarity Economy,

Mr. Daniel Fasquelle, Député du Pas-de-Calais

Mr. Pascale Got, Députée de la Gironde

Mesdames, Messieurs, chers amis,

C'est pour moi un vrai plaisir et un grand honneur d'être parmi vous aujourd'hui.

I would like to thank you for the kind invitation addressed to the World Tourism Organization on the occasion of 3rd Parliamentarian Meeting on Tourism.

Mme Carole Delga, it is a pleasure to join you on this occasion.

France is the most visited tourism destination in the world.

The commitment of your government and all public authorities along with the dynamics and innovative spirit of your private sector have made it possible for France to consolidate this position year after year despite the growing competition in the international markets.

Chers amis, Dear Friends

For those of you who are not familiar with our work, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the UN specialized agency in charge of advancing the development of responsible and sustainable tourism.

We have therefore before us a growing yet very rewarding challenge.

Travel and tourism has become a global phenomenon, playing a great role in the life of millions and millions of people.

Tourism is economic growth, employment, exports and development opportunities.

Today, hundreds of millions of people live off, work in, and benefit from, this wonderful sector. In Europe alone, tourism accounts for 19 million jobs and here in France for an estimated 7.7% of total employment, plus 8% of total businesses.

International tourism represents 30% of all world exports (one trillion euros), bringing in much needed relieve to the balance of payments of countries around the world, particularly in Europe.

Moreover tourism is one of the few sectors of the economy growing amidst the current challenging conditions and one of the most

resilient as proven by its recovery over the past decade from economic crises, terrorism actions or natural disasters.

Growing amidst economic uncertainty

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

We must be realistic.

Today, there are over 200 million unemployed people around the world. According to the International Labour Organization, the world needs to create 600 million new jobs over the next decade to sustain economic growth and maintain social stability.

Meanwhile, OECD long-term projections suggest that slow economic growth and high unemployment are likely to stay with us for some time spurring even more existing inequalities.

Yet today I would like to argue that despite the challenging times we find ourselves in, there are forces at work that, if properly harnessed, can transform this global panorama and shape our world for the better.

And among these forces, I believe, lies Travel & Tourism.

In 2013, amid a sluggish economic recovery, international tourist arrivals grew by 5% to reach the historic mark of 1.087 million in one single year. For 2014, UNWTO estimates growth to continue at a

rate between 4% and 4.5%. Early indications for the first months of the year confirm this outlook.

By 2030, UNWTO forecasts the number of international tourist arrivals to reach 1.8 billion. Another six billion people are estimated to travel within their own countries each year. Here in France, for example, domestic consumption accounts for 66% of the wealth generated by tourism.

These are impressive numbers; but they are even more so when we look back.

In 1950, 25 million tourists traveled internationally. Last year that number surpassed one billion – Europe, the most visited region in the world, receives today more than 560 million international tourists, generating nearly 370 billion euros for national economies in the region.

Never before have so many people travelled to so many places. Few places on the planet have escaped the curiosity of the traveller and few are now unreachable.

For a world struggling to consolidate its economic recovery and find new avenues to build inclusive growth, the exponential and sustained progress of the tourism sector is much welcome news because behind these numbers lies a roaring, and often underestimated, engine of economic growth, job creation and development.

The message is clear: tourism can be part of the solution.

Indeed, at a time when traditional activities such as manufacturing and agriculture and other economic sectors are showing signs of fatigue, we need to recognize that a new wave of human activities is emerging.

Tourism, culture, sports, creative industries and technology. These are some of the most dynamic and economically significant activities of this decade. These are the core sectors of a “new” new economy.

In this context, allow me to highlight four key reasons why tourism is a strategic pillar for fostering economic growth and promote employment:

1. Tourism creates jobs at a rate higher than many other sectors.

We all know tourism is one of the most labor intensive sectors, yet it is also one that creates jobs at a comparatively higher rate. Data shows that in the EU, during the last decade, the annual growth rate of employment in the tourism sector has almost always been higher than the growth rate of total employment.

More important even, tourism jobs cannot be delocalized so they create job opportunities that remain in the country while opening

possibilities for employment in rural and interior parts of the territory.

2. Tourism creates wealth and jobs not just in tourism, but in many other sectors

At a time in which many economies face domestic constraints on consumption, international tourism brings not only direct export revenues, but also a very significant indirect impact through its enormous value chain. At their destinations, tourists travel by local bus or taxi, taste the local gastronomy and wines, buy local produce ensuring jobs and sleep in a hotel which buys linen from the factories of the country.

3. Tourism is one of the most resilient economic sectors

If there is one characteristic that is critical in facing today's challenges that is resilience: the flexibility and capacity to adapt to changing conditions and recover from setbacks. Indeed, looking back on past decades, we see that international tourism decreased on only three occasions: in 2001 (-0.4%), following September 11, in 2003 (-1.6%) due to the SARS outbreak and in 2009 (-3.8%) in the middle of one of the worst global economic crises of our time.

More importantly, international tourism demand always bounced back stronger with growth rates much above the average. If tourism is important in the good times, during a crisis it is vital.

4. Tourism is a key sector in the transformation to the Green Economy

The United Nations identified tourism as one of 11 sectors that are vital to greening the global economy.

With the right investment, tourism can be a lead change agent in the move to a Green Economy by driving economic growth and job creation while simultaneously improving resource efficiency, minimizing environmental degradation and raising environmental awareness among travellers.

In this regard, allow me to commend the government of France for its long standing commitment to the sustainable tourism agenda through its leadership of the Sustainable Tourism Task Force of the Marrakesh process.

In this regard, as France prepares to host in 2015, the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21), allow me to invite you to join UNWTO in promoting the role that tourism can have in this important process.

Dear Friends,

The answer to the question of today's meeting – what if tourism would be part of the solution for the economic recovery - is without any doubt, Yes, Oui.

Tourism is not only one of the solutions to propel the economic recovery, but also one of the solutions for our long term objectives of building a more resilient and equitable economic growth.

With over one billion people traveling internationally each year, six billion traveling domestically and hundreds of millions working in the sector, we cannot talk about economic growth and development without talking about tourism.

It is thus with great pleasure that we see France placing tourism as a national priority as we trust enlisting tourism as a national policy and promoting strong public-public collaboration is one of the keys to ensure the sustainable development of tourism and its contribution to the economy and to employment.

Merci.