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Introductory statement by the Secretary-General

I. Tourism: growth and responsibility

1. International tourism has continued to progress strongly in the last two years despite a lingering economic recovery, increased geopolitical challenges, health scares and natural disasters affecting many parts of the world.

2. In 2014, the number of **international tourist arrivals** reached 1,133 million, a 4.3% growth over the previous year. This result consolidates the fifth consecutive year of robust growth in international tourist arrivals following the 2009 global economic crisis. Data for the first months of 2015 confirm this trend, with international tourist arrivals growing by 4% between January and April, according to the June 2015 issue of the *UNWTO World Tourism Barometer*.

3. As in recent years, the growth in **international tourism receipts** followed that of arrivals closely. In 2014, receipts increased by 3.8% in real terms as compared to a growth of 4.3% in arrivals, reaching US\$ 1,246 billion (EUR 938 billion). Adding the earnings generated from international passenger transport, total exports from international tourism reached US\$ 1.5 trillion (EUR 1.1 trillion) in 2014, representing 6% of international trade and 30% of the world's service exports.

4. **By region, Europe**, the most visited region with over half the world's international tourist arrivals, saw an increase of 3% in 2014 to reach 582 million and a further growth of 5% in the first months of 2015. Receipts from international tourism grew slightly above arrivals (+4%), accounting for US\$ 509 billion (EUR 383 billion) in exports for European destinations in 2014 and making an important contribution to the economic recovery in the region.

5. International tourist arrivals in **Asia and the Pacific** grew by 5% in 2014 to reach 263 million and 4% between January and April 2015, consolidating the region as the second most visited in the world (23% share). Receipts grew slightly slower (+4%) in view of the below average growth in South-East Asia, reaching US\$ 377 billion in 2014.

6. The **Americas** (+8%) was the best-performing region in relative terms in 2014, welcoming an additional 13 million international tourist arrivals and raising the total to 181 million much due to the recovery of the US economy. This trend is confirmed in the first four months of 2015 as the region saw a further 6% growth in international tourist arrivals. Nonetheless, the growth in arrivals was not followed by receipts which grew only 3% to a total of US\$ 274 billion in 2014.



7. International tourism in the **Middle East** showed clear signs of recovery after three consecutive years of decline. The region attracted 5% more international tourist arrivals in 2014, bringing the total up to 51 million, and showed a further 4% increase in the first months of 2015. Receipts grew even stronger, at 6%, to reach US\$ 49 billion in 2014.

8. **Africa's** international tourist numbers grew by an estimated 3% in 2014 to reach 56 million while receipts increased by 3% to a total of US\$ 36 billion despite the impact of the Ebola outbreak in the region. Data for 2015 shows, nonetheless, a significant slowdown, with international tourist arrivals estimated to have declined by 6% between January and April.

9. In terms of **outbound** as measured by international tourism expenditure, the past two years have seen the recovery of the traditional source markets compensating for some slowdown in the expenditure of large emerging markets, which had been driving growth in recent years.

10. Among the leading markets, expenditure from China, the largest source market in the world, was up by 28% in 2014. As for the other two main emerging markets, the Russian Federation (-6%) lost strength and Brazil still grew by 2% despite the appreciation of the US dollar against the real. Expenditure from the USA, the second largest source market in the world, grew by 6%. Noteworthy is also the growth from France (+11%), Italy (+7%) and the UK (+3%). By contrast, expenditure from Germany, the third largest market, was rather flat (+1%).

11. For **2015**, UNWTO forecasts international tourist arrivals to grow between 3% and 4% in line with the foreseen global economic growth of 3.3% as estimated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). By region, growth is expected to be stronger in Asia and the Pacific (+4% to +5%) and the Americas (+4% to +5%), followed by Europe (+3% to +4%). Arrivals are expected to grow by 3% to 5% in Africa and by 2% to 5% in the Middle East.

12. Considering that this document was prepared in August 2015, updated information on international tourism results in 2015 will be provided to the 21st session of the General Assembly.

13. The exponential development of the tourism sector in recent years is very positive news as the sector increasingly contributes to creating jobs, promoting investment, trade and infrastructure development and fostering opportunities for social inclusion. Yet, the expansion of the tourism sector also reminds us that with growth comes responsibility and that it is ever more imperative to ensure that the development of tourism is done in accordance with the three pillars of sustainability.

14. Community engagement and respect, the effective management of natural resources, the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and social responsibility must be a priority to all stakeholders in the tourism sector. Recent media reports on tourism 'massification' and 'too much tourism' in some destinations reminds us of our responsibility in ensuring that sustainability is at the core of tourism development.

II. The global context and its impact on the tourism sector

15. Tourism development has been, and will continue to be, impacted by a series of key external factors:

- (a) First, a slow pace of economic recovery and a slow return to full employment – according to the IMF (*World Economic Outlook, July 2015*), global economic growth is projected at 3.3% in 2015, marginally lower than in 2014, with a gradual pick-up in advanced economies and a

slowdown in emerging markets and developing economies. In 2016, growth is expected to strengthen to 3.8%. In this context, international tourism is expected to continue rising at 3% or above as trends show that international tourist arrivals tend to follow closely the global economic cycle.

Despite the improvements in the global economic situation, unemployment remains a major challenge in many economies, particularly for the youth. In this framework, tourism can make a major contribution to creating jobs; according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), accommodation and restaurants are, together with private-sector services, expected to create jobs at the fastest rate of any sector in the economy for the next five years.

(b) Second, geopolitical challenges and safety and security concerns – security is of increased concern for the tourism sector. Health pandemics and terrorism acts are taking the lives of people around the world and threatening the socioeconomic well-being of millions. In today's interconnected world every problem is a global problem, a global concern and therefore a global responsibility. The Ebola outbreak and the atrocity committed against tourists in Tunisia reminds us of the urgent need for the tourism sector to:

- take an active role in the relevant mechanisms created by the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations to fight terrorism and coordinate the response to other global threats such as health pandemics;
- make full use of the existing coordination mechanisms for the tourism sector such as the Tourism Response Network (TERN) coordinated by UNWTO;
- ensure the preparedness of the sector to deal with crisis at national level through the development of tourism crisis management plans, capacity building and stepping up the inclusion of tourism into national emergency plans.

(c) Third, changing business models and consumer behaviour – the impact of the global economic crisis and the advances in technology have accelerated the shift in business models and consumer behaviour. The rise of entrepreneurship, the so-called 'sharing economy' and the driving role of consumers have taken centre stage. While we welcome innovation, we must also underline the need of the sector to find progressive solutions to safeguard consumer rights and quality standards and ensure a level playing field for all businesses. Destinations and companies are required to adjust their policies and strategies to the changes in the market in order to remain competitive. Indeed, today, destinations and companies can reach out directly to consumers through a range of digital platforms. Conversely, consumers have access to more information, more choices, and more opportunities to voice their opinions and can be the whistle-blowers for unethical practices or the biggest ambassadors for destinations and service providers.

(d) Fourth, the post-2015 sustainable development agenda – the international agenda for the coming 15 years will be marked by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a universal 17 goal plan of action for people, planet and prosperity for all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership aimed at building on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what these did not achieve. Tourism is included in the SDGs in the introduction, as a target in Goal 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), in Goal 12 (ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) and in Goal 14 (conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). Issues such as climate change, effective resource management, poverty reduction and inclusive growth need to be at the centre stage of our action.

In this respect, all tourism stakeholders, including tourists themselves, needs to take full responsibility of their environmental and social impact through adequate policies and business strategies which monitor and minimize the possible negative effects of tourism development and maximize the distribution of its benefits among host communities.

III. UNWTO – adapting to a changing world

16. 2015 marks two important anniversaries: 70 years of the United Nations and the 40th anniversary of the creation of UNWTO in 1975. These milestones are an occasion to reflect on the role of our sector and our Organization.

17. Back in 1975, UNWTO was composed of 78 Member States and tourism was a rather ‘young’ sector with 220 million international tourists travelling the world. Today, forty years later, our membership has grown to 158 Member States, six Associate Members and over 450 Affiliate Members. Tourism expanded considerably to become one of the fastest growing sectors of our times, delivering countless opportunities for economic growth and inclusive development while fostering peace and mutual understanding between people of all backgrounds.

18. In this context, and in line with the two pillars guiding our Programme of Work – Competitiveness and Sustainability – the action of UNWTO is focused on:

(a) Positioning tourism higher in national and international agendas to ensure that due recognition is given to the sector within national priorities, the UN system and other relevant fora such as the G20, the European Union, the Association of South-East Asia Nations (ASEAN) or the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC). In this context, it is of particular relevance the increasing recognition of tourism with the UN agenda as well as the work of the T.20, the Meeting of the Tourism Ministers of the G20 (the sixth Meeting of the T.20 will take place in the Republic of Turkey on 29-30 September 2015 in line with the G20 Presidency and focus on tourism, SMEs and employment).

Also in this regard, the proposal to have **2017** designated by the UN as **the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development** is a unique opportunity to advance tourism’s recognition and contribution to sustainable development.

(b) Promoting public-public partnerships and cross-cutting policies for tourism through the coordinated work of tourism administrations with relevant areas such as trade, environment, culture, interior, foreign affairs or transport. In this regard, the Secretariat has developed a series of initiatives to foster the coordination between the Ministers of Tourism and the Ministers of Transport, Trade, Environment, Culture or Foreign Affairs. In this context, UNWTO has also reinforced its coordination with the relevant UN organizations and others such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Trade Center (ITC).

(c) Stepping up strategic alliances and reinforcing public-private partnerships with relevant global and regional organizations such as the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) or the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) to ensure aligned advocacy and coordinated actions and a stronger integration of the UNWTO Affiliate Members into the work of the Organization through programme such as the ‘UNWTO Prototypes’ and the UNWTO Networks, created to group participants by areas of interest;

(d) Building competitive destinations through knowledge, quality and innovation, by among others, reinforcing the collection and dissemination of statistics and the identification of latest tourism trends and forecasts as well as the training of national administrations to advance the quality, coverage and comparability of tourism statistics, the implementation of the Tourism Satellite Account and market knowledge; the creation of a certification scheme for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to be presented to the 21st session of the General Assembly (QUEST) and the UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism.

(e) Addressing barriers to competitiveness and growth by promoting visa facilitation, intelligent taxation and connectivity in close collaboration with relevant organizations as well as advancing the draft of the Convention on the protection of tourists/consumers and travel organizers as well as the promotion of regional integration and cross-national routes. In this context, several reports have been prepared by UNWTO on the impact of visa facilitation on economic growth and job creation through tourism and the Secretariat has stepped up its cooperation with ICAO to work on all common issues including visas, connectivity and climate change. In this context, it is worth noting the significant progress registered worldwide in terms of visa facilitation in recent years. According to the *UNWTO Visa Openness Report*, 62% of the world's population was required a traditional visa prior to departure in 2014, down from 77% in 2008.

(f) Advancing social responsibility with the promotion of tourism for all, gender equality and child protection in tourism. In this regard, the Secretariat welcomes the dynamism of the new World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) led by its Chair, Mr. Pascal Lamy, as well as of the World Tourism Network on Child Protection led by its new chair, Ms. Carol Bellamy. The work of both the Committee and the Network are fundamental in the promotion and implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. Simultaneously, there has been a growing focus on engaging the private sector in the promotion and implementation of the Code – as of June 2015, a total of 417 private signatories from 57 countries (plus four regional associations and one global association) had committed to promote and implement the Code as well to report their actions in that regard to the WCTE. Also noteworthy in this regard is the proposal by the WCTE to transform the Global Code of Ethics in Tourism into a Convention.

(g) Accelerating the sustainability agenda in the framework of the Sustainable Tourism Programme of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) adopted at the Rio+20 Conference. Over the next decade, it will be essential to decouple environmental degradation from economic growth and thus increase the net contribution of economic activities to poverty eradication and inclusive social development. The 10YFP will encourage innovation and cooperation among stakeholders and accelerate the shift in the way our societies produce and use goods and services. The Sustainable Tourism Programme is one of six initial 10YFP programmes. It is led by the UNWTO and co-led by the governments of France, the Republic of Korea and Morocco, and brings together a variety of stakeholders partnering for its effective implementation.

(h) Increasing development assistance in tourism and strengthening the support to Member States by calling upon the international community to address the gap between the weight of the sector in developing countries' economies and the mere 0.09% share of official development assistance (ODA) allocated to tourism at the global level in 2013. In this regard, the proposal of the Working Group on ODA to create a *Tourism for Development Facility* (TDF), constitutes a mechanism for leveraging ODA-eligible bilateral contributions to support activities in developing countries, while enhancing the recognition of tourism as a development tool and increasing ODA funding. In this regard, the Secretariat encourages Member States to take a leading role as donors to the TDF. In this context, the Secretariat also expresses its utmost appreciation to all

countries and organizations which have contributed to UNWTO development assistance projects in 2014 and 2015 (Germany, the European Union, the Europamundo Foundation, the Republic of Korea and the STEP Foundation).

(i) Placing tourism in the global safety and security agenda and supporting Member States on related issues. In this regard, UNWTO has strengthened its cooperation with the relevant UN agencies and organizations in this area, including the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), for promoting tourism security. UNWTO has also joined the CTITF's Working Group on Protection of Critical Infrastructure, Vulnerable Targets, Internet and Tourism Security in 2014.

19. To ensure the effective implementation of the above, the following actions were taken to advance the reform of the Organization, as outlined in the White Paper approved by the General Assembly in 2011:

(a) Creation within the Secretariat of the Member Relations Committee to coordinate and reinforce the identification, response and communication with Members, including Affiliate Members, and of the Research and Publications Committee to provide guidance on research activities, identify research items that can contribute to the agenda-setting and the normative function of the Organization and provide inputs to the Secretaries of the Technical Committees, subsidiary organs of the Executive Council, on their respective agendas.

(b) Renewal of the Technical Committees on Competitiveness and Sustainability and creation of thematic networks, which, alongside the Committee on Tourism Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account, contribute to ensure that the work of the Organization is based upon specialized experts and representatives of relevant organizations;

(c) Increasing the integration of the Affiliate Members into the work of the Organization and maximizing their role in promoting effective models of public-private partnerships, through the implementation of joint actions; the development and implementation of public-private partnership pilot projects – the UNWTO Prototypes; and the development of thematic 'networks' gathering Affiliate Members by areas of interest such as shopping tourism and food tourism, following the model of the Knowledge Network, as well as the full integration of the Knowledge Network with the Affiliate Members Programme.

(d) A series of administrative measures including the implementation of an ethics function, the approval of detailed financial rules on procurement and the implementation of IPSAS since January 2014.

(e) Assignment by the Secretariat of a Liaison Officer in Geneva, Switzerland, as of 1 March 2015, to reinforce the coordination and advocacy with the UN system and relevant international organizations.

IV. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

20. The General Assembly is invited to take note of the introductory statement by the Secretary-General.