



## Executive Council

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### Report of the Secretary-General

#### Part I: Current situation and activities

##### (a) International tourism in 2016 and 2017

###### I. International tourism in 2016

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1. Demand for international tourism remained robust in 2016 despite challenges. International tourist arrivals grew by 3.9% to reach a total of 1,235 million, according to the January issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. Some 46 million more tourists travelled internationally last year compared to 2015.
2. 2016 was the seventh consecutive year of sustained growth following the 2009 global economic and financial crisis. A comparable sequence of uninterrupted solid growth has not been recorded since the 1960s.
3. By region, Asia and the Pacific (+8%) led growth, fuelled by strong demand from both intra- and interregional source markets. Africa (+8%) enjoyed a strong rebound after two weaker years. In the Americas (+4%) the positive momentum continued. Europe (+2%) showed rather mixed results, with double-digit growth in some destinations offset by decreases in others. Demand in the Middle East (-4%) was also uneven, with positive results in some destinations, but declines in others.
4. Results in **Europe** were rather mixed with a number of destinations affected by safety and security challenges. International arrivals reached 620 million in 2016, or 12 million (+2%) more than in 2015. Northern Europe (+6%) and Central Europe (+4%) both recorded sound results, while in Southern Mediterranean Europe arrivals grew by 1% and in Western Europe results were flat.
5. **Asia and the Pacific** (+8%) led growth across regions in both relative and absolute terms, recording 24 million more international tourist arrivals in 2016 to total 303 million. Growth was strong in all four subregions, with Oceania receiving 10% more arrivals, South Asia 9% more and North-East Asia and South-East Asia both 8% more.
6. International tourist arrivals in the **Americas** (+4%) increased by 8 million to reach 201 million, consolidating the solid results recorded in the last two years. Growth was somewhat stronger in South



America and Central America (both +6%), while the Caribbean and North America recorded around 4% more arrivals.

7. Available data for **Africa** points to an 8% rebound in international arrivals in 2016 after two troubled years, adding 4 million arrivals to reach 58 million. Sub-Saharan Africa (+11%) led growth, while a gradual recovery started in North Africa (+3%).

8. The **Middle East** received 54 million international tourist arrivals in 2016. Arrivals decreased an estimated 4% with mixed results among the region's destinations. Results for both Africa and the Middle East should be read with caution as they are based on limited available data.

9. **International tourism receipts** grew at a similar pace in this period (complete 2016 receipts results will be reported in May).

10. As for **outbound tourism as measured by international tourism expenditure**, available data for the first three quarters of 2016 indicates a positive performance in most of the ten leading source markets in the world: China (+14%), Australia (+8%), the USA (+8%), France (+7%) the Republic of Korea (+5%), Germany (+4%) and the UK (+3%).

11. By contrast, expenditure from the Russian Federation (-37%) was weak reflecting the economic constraints and the depreciation of the ruble against virtually all other currencies.

## **II. International tourism in 2017**

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12. Based on current trends, the outlook of the UNWTO Panel of Experts and economic prospects, **UNWTO projects international tourist arrivals worldwide to grow at a rate of 3% to 4% in 2017.**

13. Europe is expected to grow at 2% to 3%, Asia and the Pacific and Africa both at 5% to 6%, the Americas at 4% to 5% and the Middle East at 2% to 5%, given the higher volatility in the region.

14. Considering that this document was prepared in March 2017, updated information on international tourism in 2017 will be provided verbally to the Executive Council at its 105th session.

## **III. Actions to be taken by the Executive Council**

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15. The Executive Council is invited to take note of the report of the Secretary-General on the current situation and prospects for international tourism.