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International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General informs the Members of the Commission about the UNWTO activities in preparation in the framework of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.



International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017

I. Introduction

1. The present document follows the adoption of resolution A/RES/653(XXI) at the twenty-first session of the UNWTO General Assembly (Medellín, Colombia, 12-17 September 2015), which refers to the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.
2. This document also recalls the UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution A/RES/70/193 entitled "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017", adopted on 22 December 2015, which invites UNWTO to "facilitate the organization and implementation of the International Year, in collaboration with Governments, relevant organizations of the United Nations System, other international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders".
3. In response to the above resolutions, UNWTO has established a Steering Committee for the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, which comprises members from governments, other international organizations, the private sector, academia and civil society to support the design and implementation of activities of the International Year.
4. UNWTO activities in preparation and in the framework of the International Year 2017 will include advocacy work, awareness raising, knowledge creation and dissemination, policy promotion, events, as well as the fostering of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Public-Private Sector Partnerships.
5. As of this date, the major milestone events are:
 - (a) Official announcement of the preparations for the International Year at the First World Conference on Tourism for Development, to be held in Beijing, China, from 18 to 21 May 2016,
 - (b) Official launch of the International Year in Madrid, Spain, during FITUR in January 2017; and
 - (c) Closing ceremony in Geneva, Switzerland, in December 2017.
6. The Plan for the Observance of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017, outlining the key objectives, planned activities by UNWTO, and proposed activities to be undertaken by governments, the private sector, academia, international organizations, NGOs and civil society, as well as tourists, is enclosed in the Annex.

Annex. Plan for the Observance of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017

1. Introduction

Fifty years after the celebration of the International Tourist Year on *Tourism, Passport to Peace* (1967) and fifteen years since the *International Year of Ecotourism* (2002), the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2017 the *International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development*.

This decision comes at a particularly important moment for the international community and the tourism sector as the world embraces the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets.

The UN General Assembly has invited UNWTO to “facilitate the organization and implementation of the International Year, in collaboration with Governments, relevant organizations of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders” (Resolution A/RES/70/193).

This is an invaluable opportunity for the whole sector to promote the value of sustainable tourism as a tool for economic growth and maximize the contribution of sustainable tourism to a transformative, people-centered and universal development agenda.

2. Objectives

The International Year aims to raise awareness of the value and contribution that sustainable tourism can make towards development and to engage all stakeholders in making the sector a catalyst for positive change. It shall help in achieving policy changes in the field of tourism development on national, regional and international levels.

In the context of the universal SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, the International Year will highlight tourism’s role in fostering the following five pillars:

- (1) Economic growth
- (2) Job creation, entrepreneurship and inclusiveness
- (3) Environmental preservation and effective resource management
- (4) The promotion and protection of cultural values and heritage
- (5) Cultural diversity, mutual understanding and peace

3. Lines of Action

The activities to be planned for the Year will be focused around **five key lines of action**:

- (1) **Advocacy**: To place sustainable tourism as a tool for development higher in the national, regional and global agendas and the promotion of a holistic approach to tourism policy.
- (2) **Public awareness**: To increase awareness among the public, particularly tourists, on their active role in harnessing tourism’s contribution to sustainable development.

(3) **Knowledge creation and dissemination**: To provide for a better understanding of sustainable tourism and its contribution to economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability in both developing and developed countries and promote the exchange of good practices and knowledge sharing, particularly in terms of innovative policies and practices.

(4) **Policy**: To promote policies that advance and maximize tourism's contribution to the 2030 development agenda and the SDGs at national level and foster an integral policy approach to sustainable tourism development.

(5) **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Public/Private Sector Partnerships**: To accelerate the development of CSR in tourism and tourism-related companies and stimulate public/private sector cooperation for the development and implementation of sustainable tourism practices.

4. How to get engaged

UNWTO invites Member and non-Member States, Associate and Affiliate Members, other international and regional organizations, the private sector, academia, civil society and other tourism stakeholders — including the billions of tourists travelling domestically and internationally every year — to engage in the celebration of the International Year.

Activities to be undertaken by different stakeholders could include, *inter alia*:

(1) **Governments**, through special national committees or focal points responsible for the celebration of the International Year, to organize special events, meetings and conferences; to develop communication and advocacy initiatives and campaigns; and to grant national awards for sustainable tourism initiatives and relevant research.

(2) The **private sector**, to participate in national plans and programmes and support the building of new and innovative Public/Private Sector Partnerships. It can engage in activities that showcase the role of tourism as a tool for development and that accelerate the development of CSR in tourism and tourism-related companies as well as to share and engage their partners in the celebrations.

(3) **Academia**, to engage in research to advance knowledge on the value of sustainable tourism as a means to development and the promotion of international understanding and peace. The establishment of new curricula, research, events and lecture series can also be considered, as much as the identification of local and global relevant initiatives.

(4) **International Organisations**, to pay particular attention to tourism in their efforts to promote sustainable development. They should identify key tourism related initiatives that are relevant to their programme of work and highlight these through projects, events, conferences and other public awareness campaigns.

(5) **NGOs and civil society**, to develop and engage in advocacy initiatives, presenting lessons learned and their expertise based on field experience. They may also strengthen existing networks and regional cooperation efforts to improve channels of communication and organize or host field visits and media trips to promote their work.

(6) **Tourists**, to commit to responsible behavior towards the environment, local cultures and host communities when travelling in their own countries and around the world.

The above activities are suggestions and may be subject to decisions and definitions by the organizers and interested parties. UNWTO will facilitate the debate on pre-activities throughout 2016 and serve as the focal point for disseminating activities during the International Year. This will be done with the full engagement of UNWTO Member and non-Member States and other relevant partners through the Steering Committee.

5. UNWTO Activities

The following preliminary list presents an overview of planned activities by UNWTO that will be further elaborated in the course of 2016. In line with the UNGA Resolution A/RES/70/193 of the International Year, these activities will be funded through voluntary contributions:

- (1) Designing and implementing a communication campaign (logo, website, etc.) to promote the opportunities of sustainable tourism as a key tool for development, including the engagement of tourists.
- (2) Using the International Year to promote and receive support for flagship initiatives of UNWTO and its partners, such as the *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* and the *10YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme*.
- (3) Holding a series of conferences and events focused on enhancing the knowledge base and the exchange of good practices on the linkages between sustainable tourism and development.
- (4) Launching a special Award on Tourism for Development to promote the best public and private sector initiatives, state-of-the-art research and achievements of the International Year.
- (5) Partnering with other UN agencies, in particular with the members of the UN Steering Committee on Tourism for Development, and other relevant international and regional organizations, including development finance institutions, in joint activities related to the International Year.

In addition to activities that require voluntary contributions, the Secretariat will be engaged in:

- (6) Aligning the theme of World Tourism Day (WTD) 2017, *Sustainable Tourism – a tool for development* so that the activities around WTD are part of and reinforce the objectives of the International Year, as decided by the UNWTO General Assembly 2015.
- (7) Creating a mechanism in order to acknowledge initiatives aligned with the International Year.
- (8) Encouraging and supporting national initiatives by Member and non-Member States of UNWTO, and its Associate and Affiliate Members, for the International Year.
- (9) Seeking the active engagement of the six UNWTO Regional Commissions (Africa, the Americas, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Middle East, and South Asia) and the World Committee of Tourism Ethics.
- (10) Publishing and disseminating a flagship report on Sustainable Tourism for Development.
- (11) Building a strategy for mobilizing additional resources — financial and non-financial, through partnerships and voluntary contributions — to implement the programme and the objectives of the International Year.