

‘Tourism Statistics: A Catalyst for Development’ Seminar

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UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili

Ministerial dialogue

Topic: the importance of tourism statistics: ‘better measure to better manage’

Lead-in question: *What is the role of UNWTO in helping countries use statistics to elaborate sound policies and strategies for the development of the sustainable tourism sector?*

Points for response:

UNWTO was recognized as the official tourism statistics agency in 2008 by the UN Statistical Committee.

We have the most comprehensive tourism statistics available.

These are based around the two official UN statistics frameworks for measuring tourism:

- the **International Recommendations** for Tourism Statistics and
- the **Tourism Satellite Account**

These are guides for producing data that is credible and comparable across countries, across standards and over time. I encourage you to use them.

Now we are furthering our statistics work as part of our contributions to the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063.

Strengthening systems for tourism statistics is one of the focus areas in UNWTO's own Agenda for Africa.

Our agenda intersects with the African Union's roadmap.

We are looking for a harmonization of statistics on tourism's contribution to African economies.

Because if statistics read the same way everywhere, then policies can be built with a solid base for addressing strategic issues.

Going beyond the economic, in 2017 we launched work towards MST, a 'Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism' in all its dimensions – economic but also social and environmental.

This MST roadmap is advancing on a global level, but Africa's participation is key.

Why? Firstly because if we are to get a true picture of sustainable tourism development then we will rely on innovation.

We will rely on finding ways to modernize data sources and collection.

According to the GSM Association, which represents mobile network operators worldwide, Africa has 442 technology hubs (including 55 in Nigeria).

This huge number has risen more than 50% since 2016 – in just two years.

Every hub is expanding innovation, building capacity and generating ideas within African economies.

We can channel this innovation and investment in technology into improving statistics.

This brings me to the second reason: in Africa perhaps more than anywhere else, tourism needs a sound statistics base.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development issued a paper last year on ‘Tourism for transformative and inclusive growth’ in Africa.

It said that many countries have a shortage of basic statistics on tourism’s impact – how it is distributed and how it can be increased.

We are also missing statistics that are crucial for making tourism truly inclusive – for example activities by gender, or cross-border tourism trade.

Even after years of improvement, finding accurate and updated data on many countries is difficult.

This is a good reason why we urgently need strong government support for tourism in the overall development agenda.

MST will help our Member States to provide a strong statistics foundation for tourism in the context of sustainable development.

I ask you all to unite behind this cause. I am not just asking tourism ministries here.

I am asking all government departments that can make a difference, and especially finance ministries.

I am very grateful that Minister Adeosun (*M. of Finance of Nigeria*) and Minister Udoma (*M. of Budget and National Planning*) are on our panel today.

Without the support of ministries like theirs, we cannot get the resources we need to raise the profile, and the impact, of tourism in nations and regions.

I ask you all to engage with us.

With your help we can better measure, and then better manage, tourism in a way that serves you and serves Africa. Thank you.