

**‘Tourism Statistics: A Catalyst for Development’ Seminar**

Abuja, Nigeria, 5 June 2018, 9:30

**UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili**

Opening Remarks

**Minister Mohammed,**

Thank you for leading this initiative towards a better framework for statistics in Africa.

Today we focus on helping tourism ministries like yours build the capacity to better measure progress in the sector.

And there has been progress here in Nigeria under your leadership.

I thank you for your support and partnership.

**Minister Bello,**

We are grateful that you host us for our work towards more complete sustainability in the sector.

Thank you for hosting us here in Abuja and for your support to UNWTO.

**Dr. Kale,**

You reformed Nigeria's data process and declared Nigeria the largest economy in Africa.

You have been a crucial force in making sure Nigeria's contribution is recognized.

It means a lot to us that you are here in support of credible and reliable tourism statistics for the region.

**Honourable Ministers, Ambassadors and Heads of Delegation  
Representatives of tourism and regional authorities  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Thank you all for your presence today.

Today we focus on a subject of huge importance for charting a positive future for tourism.

In Africa and everywhere, tourism has a positive impact on reducing poverty.

The United Nations Conference for Trade and Development estimates that tourism provides around 8.5% of Africa's GDP, 46% of its exports and 1 out of 14 of its jobs.

But it is not given enough credit as a transformative sector.

The level of speakers and participants at our regional commission meeting yesterday tells me that this is changing.

Heads of state and key business figures are recognising tourism for what it is.

But in many cases we are still missing the statistics that tell us exactly how tourism has helped destinations and communities.

UNWTO is the UN's official tourism statistics agency.

One of the key steps in our Agenda for Africa is strengthening tourism statistics systems.

We need your help to fill in the knowledge gaps so we can measure the impact of tourism in your destinations.

I see 3 key requirements to develop statistics programmes in Africa.

We need more cooperation, between all relevant national institutions and the private sector.

Out of this we need knowledge exchange within the region.

And we need more financial and technical support to modernize data sources.

These steps will help us develop statistics systems that are able to give real support to the African Union Agenda 2063 and the global Sustainable Development Goals.

Tourism in Africa has huge untapped potential.

The only way this can be developed is if we can manage the sector better – in other words, making policy decisions based upon strong evidence.

For this our statistics need to be harmonized, of high quality, and covering all dimensions of sustainable development.

I look forward to discussing this in detail in our ministerial dialogue.

I want to end by assuring you we are here to listen to your concerns.

And we are here to support you put in place mechanisms that will allow you to collect relevant statistics.

So please, use us. Use the statistics frameworks we offer. We are here to help.

I thank you and wish you an insightful seminar.