



## **Message for World Tourism Day 2016**

**Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**

### **“Tourism for all!”**

Tourism has experienced a revolution in the past 50 years.

In 1950 there were near 25 million international tourists crossing borders in a single year; today there are around 1.2 billion people travelling the world. Travelling has become a huge part of many people’s lives.

When we travel, we come across new people, new sights, and new ideas. Often our perception of the world changes as we see more of it. We definitely become better people.

However, we must not forget that for many of us, travelling can be quite a difficult process.

15% of the world’s population is estimated to live with some kind of disability or another. This is my friends about 1 billion people around the world who may be unable to enjoy the privileges of knowing other cultures, experiencing nature at its fullest and experiencing the thrill of embarking on a journey to explore new sights and new places.

Accessibility for all should be therefore at the heart and at the center of tourism policies and business strategies. Not as a human rights only which is important on its own, but also as a great market potential and as a great business opportunity.

With the world’s population ageing, all of us will benefit sooner or later from universal accessibility in tourism.

As we celebrate World Tourism Day today, let us recall that all of the world’s citizens have the right to experience the incredible diversity of our planet and the beauty of the world we live in.

We thus urge all countries and destinations, as well as all the industry stakeholders, to promote accessibility for all in the physical environment, in the transport systems, in the public facilities and services and in the information and communications channels.

I wish you a very very happy World Tourism Day and a future full of enriching and compelling travel experiences to be enjoyed by all.

I thank you all very much!