Opening remarks by Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General

1. H.E. Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the State of Qatar

Thank you for your presence. It's a clear and strong message, We understand it. We appreciate it

Your support has been essential to make tourism in Qatar what it is today.

Over my 8 years as SG I have seen how Qatar has developed into a prime tourism destination. Still remember (1996 economic conference, cruise ships)

UNWTO is very happy to have been part of that process. Latest action, We have supported Qatar's new visa policy (Qatar waived entry Visa Requirements for Citizens of 80 Countries last August)
as we trust that travel facilitation is at the core of developing tourism and unlocking its socio-economic benefits.

Pleased to see Qatar's commitment to position tourism as a sector to diversify the economy, enhance sustainability - environmental, economic, and cultural - and a national priority for the coming 5 years. The changes that Qatar will be undergoing in the lead up to the FIFA World Cup in 2022 and its new tourism strategy will surely open a new era for development in Qatar.

I Trust that together - creating true partnerships between all stakeholders – both public and private – you will achieve your national objective to develop tourism as a tool for a better future for Qatar.

2. Dear Mr. Al-Ibrahim (Chief Tourism Development Officer, Qatar Tourism Authority)

   Dear Friend

   Thank you for years of collaboration

   China
Dear 3. Helen Marano (Senior Vice President, World Travel and Tourism Council)

UNWTO and WTTC partnership an example of the way we need to work in our sector
Do what we preach
Walk the talk

4. Mr Al Baker ,
Long time friend
Respect , professionalism and persistence .

5. Ministers, Deputy Ministers and State Secretaries
(Lebanon, Jamaica, Tunisia, Liberia, Croatia, Morocco, Hungary, Pakistan, Equatorial Guinea, Romania)

6. Dear friends,
الأصدقاء. و الإخوة الكرام
السلام عليكم
و أهلا بكم في الدوحة
اهلاً بكم في قطر

Welcome to Doha
Welcome to 2017 World Tourism Day
We are not here in Qatar by accident
This year’s celebration comes at a very special time ,
2017 is the UN International year of Sustainable Tourism for Development
And at a crucial time for the Tourism Sector
As our sector, and the world at large, are at a crossroads

Dear Friends

The world, today, is living times of major transformations.
Two major global forces (Revolutions) are at the heart of these transformative forces

1. The digital IT revolution.......... clear and obvious
2. The Travel revolution...............not so clear to many

Travel and tourism, has become today an effective global force and a cornerstone of major transformations, alongside other global forces such as,

hyper-globalization,
de-localization and
digital transformation
Many world challenges today are a result of such global forces,

Climate change
Migration
Natural disasters
Health pandemics
Unemployment
Security
Digital disruption

These are all global challenges and as such must be addressed globally
But, they are also challenges for travel and travelers

Yet, despite these challenges, and against all odds, international travel and tourism continues to grow

Last year, 2016, was the seventh consecutive year in a row of above average economic growth.
This year 2017, the growth is set to continue. Another 4.5%

In 2016, there was 1235 million travelers that crossed international boarders in one year,

That is almost 1/6 of the people of the world making an international trip every year.
and while doing so, Tourism is bringing tremendous benefits to communities, economies and societies.

1. Generating $3.2 billion of spending every day globally
2. Creating 1/10 jobs all over the world
3. Representing 10% of world GDP
4. 30% of world trade in services,

Travel and tourism is today the 3rd largest export industry in the world after chemicals and fuels
UNWTO’s long-term forecasts show that by the year 2030, the 1.2 billion will reach 1.8 billion

But beyond the numbers and the economic benefits, travel and Tourism, is today a major contributor to, a transformation that slowly and gradually is bringing us together, as humans, like never before, in a fast globalized world.

Both the Digital and the travel revolutions are indeed making the new world smaller, more connected and therefore, more interdependent and, more caring. A better world indeed, and don't let any morning news make you believe otherwise
Travel and tourism are breaking down stereotypes and enabling us to experience, enjoy and celebrate the beauty of our rich cultural diversity, this indeed is tourism's greatest contribution to a better world.

Travel, my friends, opens minds, open eyes and open hearts.
We became better people when we travel
I traveled the world, I am a better person
Travel has become today a way of life
It is not any more an elitist activity, or just a human need or urge
It has become today a Human Right

My right,
To, Enjoy the world,
To, Relax
To, do business
To, seek healthcare
To, seek education

I am, therefore, confident that
In 40', 50', 60 years from now, the future generations, will look back at this time and say,

"THAT WAS THE AGE OF TRAVEL " 
But, Dear Friends

With growth comes power, and, with power, comes responsibility

With 1.8 billion travelers,
We could end up with
1.8 B opportunity, or 1.8 B disasters it's all up to us.
How we manage this impressive growth is crucial.

We need to ensure that the
1.8 B travelers, can and should, when well managed,
translate into,

1. Opportunities for inclusive economic growth
   - Buy local
2. Opportunities for more and better jobs, decent jobs.
   - hire local
3. Opportunities to protect our natural and cultural heritage - use tourism revenue
4. Opportunities to better know and respect each other.
   - learn and engage
5. Opportunities to bond people, bond hearts and minds
   - reach out
6. Opportunities to distribute wealth fairly and share prosperity
Dear friends,

The question today is,

How can we enable this transformative force, Travel & Tourism, to contribute to the global sustainable development agenda?

In all its 5 pillars:
Social .......................community empowerment and jobs
Economic ..............income generation and poverty elevation
Environmental ..........preservation and enrichment
Cultural ....................preservation and utilization
Political ....................peace and stability as prerequisites for Development and growth

This is the question that is asked of us especially in this year, 2017
Particularly in this WTD 2017

A year designated by the UNGA as,
The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

A year dedicated to the contribution of tourism to building a better world
A year dedicated to advance the 17 SDGs, our road map for 2030

A year dedicated to consolidate our commitment to the targets set in the Paris Agreement.

In doing so,
We have to step up tourism’s contribution to the sustainability agenda at all levels

Because
To become relevant, as a sector, we have to be relevant to all other elements and sectors of the sustainable development agenda

BUT
my Friends, what is sustainability?

It is to sustain LIFE on earth.
Not just to preserve its natural and cultural assets and the foundations of where we live,
How we live and who we are,
but, to do so, and in the process, elevate LIFE on earth to a higher level of progress and advanced quality for all the people.
BECAUSE
Its really all about people

This is the real challenge.

Growth and sustainability,
Progress and preservation, Going hand in hand
Not either - or ,
BUT and - plus
  win,- win .

Dear Friends

After these brief remarks , I am , we are , going to listen ,
very carefully to my friend Akbar Baker
Because
Advances in air transport are some of the key factors
for the rise of international tourists
from 25 million in 1950 to over 1.2 billion today.

Developments such as ,
Low coast carriers
Jet engine
Digitalization

Have popularized aviation
And gave more opportunities for more people to fly, ... to travel .
The growth of air transport is therefore, strongly connected with the growth of tourism and vice versa.

They are destined and connected in many ways such as,

1. Both are a force for development and have major responsibilities in building a better and more sustainable world.

2. Both are interlinked; as over half of the people travelling the world today (52-55%) arrive to their destination by air. Thus the economic impacts of tourism and aviation are linked.

3. Both have an environmental impact, particularly their contribution to climate change with an estimated 5% of CO2 emissions from tourism, 2/3 of which is from transportation.

Dear friends,

The travel writer Tim Cahill said:

“A journey is best measured in Friends rather Miles”

Because to travel is to connect with people.
We aim to make tourism and air transport pillars of a new agenda 2030 as defined in a joint ICAO / UNWTO Statement from our last GA in Medellin 2015

Together let us make air travel safer, easier, more competitive and more sustainable, more enjoyable.

1. through improving air accessibility,

2. through welcoming competition,

3. Through working closer to close the gaps that still exist between aviation and tourism;

4. Through ensuring we walk the talk on sustainability, innovation and new technologies

Dear friends,

In 2015, the international community reached three important milestones:
- The 17 SDGs, a roadmap to 2030 (UNGA)
- The Paris Agreement (UNFCCC)
- UNGA designation of 2017 as "the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development" (UNGA)
Sustainable tourism is singled out for its contribution in 3 SDG's (8,12,14) but can in fact contribute to all 17 goals from gender equality to poverty alleviation, from fighting climate change to building partnerships for development.

2017, the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, is, therefore, for us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to come together and promote travel and tourism, as one of the most effective transformative human forces of the 21st century,

Dear Friends

The International Year will not end in December 2017. Long after 2017, the gains we, as a global tourism community, have made this year must prevail and help us shape the Agenda 2030, But only if we continue to work together will tourism truly make any difference.
In order to support every action we take,

we need a proactive attitude of collaboration, public and private sector (WTTC as an example)
we need a cross-cutting approach to tourism development (example of Qatar)
we need the highest political support, a political will
we need tourism as a national and international priority in the SDG agenda.

Dear friends,

One final thought,

We travel to places that we respect,
respect the people
respect the society
respect the culture
respect the nature
respect the history

because in doing so,
we find our own reserves of self-respect
and we are able to respect everyone and everything.
That is why the motto for the celebrations of the International Year is

Travel. Enjoy. Respect.

We must make the 1.8 B people travelling the world in 2030 global ambassadors for tolerance and respect.

That is why people will continue to travel the world. That is why people will continue to travel to places like Qatar,

Dear Friends

As this will be my last World Tourism Day celebrations in my capacity as UNWTO SG

I would like to share with you a thought and a mantra that I will carry in my heart and soul, way after my challenging yet rewarding, exciting and humbling time as SG is over:

When we travel, we become better people because there is nothing more powerful than people coming together, rubbing shoulders and creating in the process a new world, just like the one Qatar is trying to build here.
My friends,
whatever our business in life is,
Our core business is and must always be

To make this world a better place.

That is why we should
Travel. , Enjoy. , Respect.

Thank you and
happy World Tourism Day.

(VIDEO)