

World Tourism Day 2017 Official Celebration  
**Sustainable Tourism – a Tool for Development**

Doha, Qatar, 27 September 2017, 9:30

**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 اهلاً 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 borders 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 3 rd 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.**

شكرًا جزيلا  
وفقكم الله و حماكم

**(VIDEO)**