

## Message by UNWTO Sec-Gen Taleb Rifai

THIS year's World Tourism Day is an opportunity to celebrate the transformative potential of one billion tourists.

Today, more than one billion tourists travel to an international destination every year. These billion tourists have made tourism a leading economic sector, contributing 10% of global GDP and 6% of the world's total exports.

Yet these big numbers represent more than just economic strength, they reflect tourism's vast potential and increasing capacity to address some of the world's most pressing challenges, including socio-economic growth, inclusive development and environmental preservation.

As a sector behind as many as one in 11 jobs worldwide, tourism is a valuable source of livelihood for millions of people. Built around the millions of cross-cultural encounters happening every day in different corners of the world, tourism is also a gateway to greater understanding of the world beyond our borders, the first step in building peace



and between communities and nations.

Tourism is more than just about reaching a destination, tourism has a global reach. Every time we travel, we become part of a global movement that has the power to drive positive change for our planet and all people.

Today, let us celebrate the value of the "One Billion Tourists" and work together in making tourism a true instrument of opportunity and inclusion.

Let us all turn the power of one billion into a genuine force for good.

# Positive growth

> Global tourist numbers up 4% in first half

THE number of international tourists rose by 4% worldwide during the first half of 2015 although security and health concerns hit hard some African destinations, the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) said recently.

Some 538 million tourists made trips to international destinations between January and June this year, 21 million more compared with the same period last year, the Madrid-based body said in a statement.

"These results show that despite increased volatility, tourism continues to consolidate the positive performance it has had over the last five years and to provide development and economic opportunities worldwide," said the organisation's head, Taleb Rifai.

Global tourism figures were hard hit by the global financial crisis, declining 4% in 2009 as an outbreak of swine flu also contributed to cash-strapped people staying at home but have risen in each year since.

Asia, the Middle East and Europe, the world's most visited



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region, all saw a 5% increase in arrivals, with the Americas posting growth of 4%.

But Africa saw a drop of 6%. North Africa, which was shaken by terrorist attacks in Tunisia, a popular lower-cost beach holiday spot for Europeans, saw arrivals fall by 10% while sub-Saharan Africa had a decline of 4%.

"Alongside the impacts of the terrorist attacks, African destinations have been impacted by the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak in a few West African countries and the slower growth

of regional economies depending on the export of oil and other commodities," the tourism body said.

Tunisia's tourism industry, which had been recovering after the Arab Spring unrest, was badly shaken in March by an attack on the Bardo museum in Tunis, followed by one in June in the resort of Sousse, that killed a total of 59 tourists.

UNWTO predicts international tourism arrivals will increase by 3-4% during all of 2015, after expanding by 4.7% last year. — AFP



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