



Statement by the Chairman of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics¹ at the closing of its eleventh meeting (held on 25-26 March 2010 at the UNWTO Headquarters in Madrid)

1. Over the two days of the meeting, special emphasis was placed on the need for the members of the Committee to work in two directions:
 - adopting the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics of 2008 (IRTS 2008 and TSA:RMF 2008);
 - applying these Recommendations.
2. In order to achieve these objectives it is necessary, as in other areas of statistics, to take important decisions with regard to certain very specific subjects:
 - concepts and definitions;
 - classifications of tourism activities and products;
 - methods of production of tourism statistics; and
 - methods for measuring tourism activity.
3. For the members of the Committee, there exists a clear agreement on underlining that communication with both producers and users of tourism statistics still constitutes a clear challenge. Consequently, the Committee discussed, on the one hand, different possible initiatives, and on the other hand, certain indispensable support elements (such as the dissemination of a basic glossary of tourism terms in relation with the measurement of tourism activity, as well as to carry out capacity-building and training courses among those responsible for compiling such statistics).
4. As part of the communication initiatives to be carried out in relation with the dissemination and application of the new Recommendations of 2008, four main groups were identified:
 - persons who are in the initial stage of learning about the importance of tourism statistics;
 - professionals who, being users of such statistics, demand statistical information of higher quality;
 - technicians of National Statistical Offices and National Tourism Administrations who have to discuss among themselves the application of concepts, definitions, classifications, methods of measurement and the adaptation itself of the international recommendations to their respective countries;
 - producers of tourism statistics who need a Guide for the compilation of such statistics.

¹ Mr. Eduardo Nunes Pereira, President of IBGE / Brazil, was elected Chairman in 2006. His term of office was renewed for the period 2008-2011.

5. The Committee took note of the initiatives that the UNWTO plans to carry out with regard to the first two groups mentioned, and which consist of the dissemination of a set of tourism tools. It should begin with the design of a *Guide to understanding and measuring a key economic activity* which will be posted on the UNWTO website with its corresponding PowerPoint presentation for the use of all those with an interest in disseminating the importance of the new Recommendations (researchers, NSO and NTA officials, consultants, etc.).
6. As for the third group, the Committee was informed by the UNWTO about the forthcoming creation of a Technical Advisory Board (TAB) to the UNWTO Statistics and TSA Unit with the following characteristics:
 - include no more than ten statistically advanced countries irrespective of their (formal) membership in the UNWTO. Besides National Tourism Administrations, National Statistical Offices should also be invited to become active partners of the TAB;
 - TAB members who are not members of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA (hereafter, “the Committee”) will be invited to attend the Committee’s meetings;
 - the decision-making process will be by general agreement of the members;
 - the initial composition will be determined by the Secretary-General. After three years, UNWTO will evaluate the functioning of the TAB and proceed, if so decided, to partially renew its composition;
 - the TAB may invite experts to discuss about specific issues or to prepare reports, upon request of the Committee, or present its own recommendations; and
 - the TAB will use the internet as the basic tool for communication and meet once a year, preferably back to back with the Committee’s annual meeting, or eventually with other initiatives of the UNWTO.
7. As needed, the TAB will report in writing to the Committee's annual meetings on its recommendations. Such recommendations are expected to focus on:
 - the construction of a set of guidelines for the development of the System of Tourism Statistics and the TSA in accordance with the UN 2008 Recommendations, in order to significantly increase the consistency, accuracy and relevance of data used by the tourism sector’s public and private decision-makers;
 - identify in the UN 2008 Recommendations those issues that would require clarification beyond dispute, in order to keep them relevant in the coming years; and
 - provide comments and suggestions on the priorities for statistical initiatives in the UNWTO Programme of Work.

8. The creation of this new body constitutes an opportunity for the Committee to play a more dynamic role and to exercise new leadership since the TAB will be a platform that will allow a more technical discussion of the issues that are on the agenda of the Committee, with the Committee performing a "filtering" function as to which subjects are to be discussed in detail in the Committee and those which are to be discussed in the TAB.
9. As for the last group (producers of tourism statistics), there is a need to have a Compilation Guide for the application of the new Recommendations. This is a commitment of both, the UNSD and the UNWTO vis-à-vis the international community, regarding which it must report to the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its next meeting in March 2011.
10. Given the importance of this commitment, the Chairman stressed to the Committee that it would be advisable for the provisional version of the Compilation Guide to be presented to the UNSC in 2011 (and which will have to be placed on the website of the UNSD) to adequately specify—in addition to the criteria followed with regard to its structure and approach—how it is planned to be finalized, as well as the role of the new Technical Advisory Group in order to keep relevant the present 2008 Recommendations and how to keep the future Compilation Guide appropriately updated.
11. Lastly, the Chairman proposed the following timetable so that the Committee can comply—in a timely manner and in the appropriate form—with its responsibility relative to the study and discussion of the provisional and final versions of the Compilation Guide. Such timetable is as follows:
 - January 27 and 28 / 2011. UNWTO Committee meeting. Discussion of the provisional IRTS 2008 Compilation Guide (CG; v.1);
 - February / 2011. Preparation and distribution of the provisional Compilation Guide to be submitted to the UNSC (CG;v.2);
 - November / 2011 UNWTO will have finished the draft of the final version of the Compilation Guide (CG; v.3);
 - January / 2012 UNWTO Statistics Committee meeting;
 - February / 2012 UNWTO will distribute the final approved document (CG; v.4).