



International tourism at one billion: building the future we want

ITB Berlin 2012

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

Dr. Philipp Rösler, Federal Minister for Economics and Technology,
Germany

Mr. Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour, Minister of Tourism, Egypt

Mr. Klaus Laepple, President of the Federal Association of the German
Tourism Industry (BTW)

Mr. Klaus Wowereit, Governing Mayor of Berlin

Mr. Raimund Hosch, President and CEO, Messe Berlin

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

Once again it is a great honor to be addressing you at the opening of ITB Berlin. This has become such an important tradition for us.

Dear Friends,

A year ago we stood here uncertain about what 2011 would bring for us. Today, we are by no means more assured, but we *can* be more confident; as we clearly endured the challenges of economic pressure,

political upheavals and natural disasters of 2011 with better than expected results (4.4%).

In closing 2011, we must pay tribute to our friends and colleagues working in tourism in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt or Japan, among others, which during 2011 took their future into their hands and have again proven their absolute resilience and commitment to the future of tourism, and indeed, the future of their own countries.

I would like to especially pay tribute to Egypt, this year's Official Partner Country of ITB. Their resilience is remarkable, their very presence here today, as a Partner Country, is an act of absolute determination. There is no doubt they will prevail.

Dear Friends,

When we met here a year ago we spoke of the Decade of Travel and Tourism.

I shared with you my belief that 2010 to 2020 would be remembered as the decade in which travel and tourism emerged as one of the most promising sectors and important human activities, contributing to a sustainable planet, a growing economy and a better life.

This year we are celebrating a special milestone along this journey. By the end of this year, 2012, international tourist arrivals will reach one billion.

One billion is an extraordinary number.

Let us for a minute look back to 1950, when traveling outside of one's country was restricted to a small elite of wealthy people and a number of adventurers. When there were just 25 million international tourists discovering the world. When the majority of the people of the world would spend their entire life never going beyond a 100 km radius.

Today, just one generation later, one billion people are on the move. By the end of 2012, one seventh of the world's population will have crossed international borders in a single year. Four billion more would have been on domestic trips within their national borders.

After many months of work, UNWTO published last October its new long-term forecast *Tourism Towards 2030*. It shows that by 2030, this number will be up to 1.8 billion a year (5 million a day).

Behind these impressive numbers, of course, lies a roaring engine of economic growth, job creation and development. Tourism is directly responsible for 5% (9% indirect) of global GDP, accounts for 30% of the world's trade in services and employs one out of every twelve people worldwide.

In 2012, as global economic prospects dim and unemployment persists, tourism is a sector that can give a much-needed boost to our economies, and should be recognized as such.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the world needs to create 600 million new jobs over the next decade to sustain economic growth. According to the same organization, one job created in tourism creates one and a half additional jobs in the tourism-related economy.

It's a simple formula: one billion tourists mean one billion opportunities. Hundreds of millions of jobs, higher income possibilities, increased investment in infrastructure and countless paths for development.

Dear Friends,

One billion is no doubt an exciting achievement, especially in the context of a challenging global economy. But as we keep underscoring, we cannot ignore that it is also a serious responsibility.

With growth comes responsibility.

With the economic growth, job creation and development that tourism brings, comes the challenge of sustainability: very simply, **meeting the needs of today's tourists and host communities while creating the conditions to build the future we want** – a future of economic, environmental and social sustainability, worthy of our children and grandchildren.

Reaching one billion tourists is a moment to celebrate, but it is also a moment to stop, step back, and assess where tourism fits into the global

sustainability debate. Let's use this year to reflect on our achievements and focus on the urgency of our challenges for the future.

With the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, or RIO+20, coming up in June, sustainability is on the global agenda as never before. Now is the perfect time to put tourism firmly on the same page.

Dear Friends,

As we reach one billion, we cannot forget that there are still millions more facing barriers to travel. If there is one message I would like to leave you with tonight, it is that travel facilitation is the one issue we must focus on in the months and years to come.

Complicated, lengthy and overpriced entry formalities are making it extremely difficult for tourists, especially from emerging economies – some of the world's fastest growing tourism source markets – to travel.

Burdensome visa processes are not just a barrier to travelers; they are a barrier to growth and job creation and an obstacle to free trade.

High costs, complicated paperwork and long waiting times discourage potential visitors, driving them to spend elsewhere.

Despite being a possible lever to create millions of jobs and stimulating billions in spending, travel facilitation is a stimulus opportunity few

countries have yet had the vision to explore. We cannot understand why technology is not being utilized in this regard.

Recent developments have been encouraging, however. Just two months ago in the USA, a destination where such barriers have been a clear obstacle to tourism growth over the last decade, President Obama signed an executive order to increase tourism, boost the economy and create jobs by easing the visa process.

President Obama's words were simple: "the more folks who visit America, the more Americans we get back to work," he said.

Dear Friends,

I urge you to make travel facilitation top of our agenda. We must speak together on this if we are to be heard at the highest levels of decision-making. It is in this belief that UNWTO has joined the voices of the sector (WTTC, IATA, WEF, ASTA, US Travel and many others) to advance this important issue.

In this regard, I must commend publicly the Minister of Tourism of Mexico, Ms Gloria Guevara, for bringing the topic to the table of the forthcoming Meeting of the Tourism Ministers of the G20, to be held in Mexico next May.

Dear Friends,

Imagine the potential of one billion people.

Imagine how business models would be transformed if one billion people demanded sustainable practices from hotels and tour operators.

Imagine how many would benefit if one billion people bought local produce or hired a local guide. These may be small actions, but given the size of our sector, their impact would be huge.

When I landed in Berlin airport last night I became part of the one billion. All of us here today are part of the one billion. Let's make sure we're not just a number. As responsible travelers, let's place our sector firmly on the course to a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Let's make the one billion count.

Thank you. Dankeschön