



2017  
INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
FOR DEVELOPMENT



**Sixth UNWTO International Conference on Tourism Statistics**  
**MEASURING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**  
Manila, Philippines, 21 – 24 June 2017

**Intro remarks by Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General**

**Ministers and Secretaries of Tourism,**

**Dear friends,**

Edward Lee Thorndike, a renowned American psychologist, famously said:

“Whatever exists at all exists in some amount.

To know it thoroughly involves knowing its quantity as well as its quality.”

We cannot really know anything until we know it completely.

This applies to life,  
to people,  
to our friends and relationships,  
to the things that we see, use and own,  
and to concepts.

Concepts like profit, society... and sustainability.

On this note I would like to welcome you to this special roundtable on tourism statistics,  
dedicated to measuring sustainable tourism.

-----  
**Dear friends,**

More than **1.2 billion** tourists crossed international borders in 2016.

This was the seventh consecutive year of growth for our sector.

It means 1 in 6 people of the world is making an international trip, benefiting economies and societies globally.

The 1.2 billion will become 1.8 billion by 2030.

However, with such growth comes power  
and with power comes increased responsibility.  
We have to solve a fundamental equation:  
how can we secure the sustainable growth of our sector  
without compromising the natural and cultural resources of our planet?

-----

**Dear friends,**

Tourism can be a true force for sustainable development.

It is mentioned in three of the 17 universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Yet with its global reach  
resilience and  
large value chain,

tourism can contribute to all 17 Goals.

Recognizing this,

the UN declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

So now is the time to really be aware of the contribution of tourism to development in each of your countries.

With 1.8 billion travelers,  
We could end up with  
1.8 B opportunities,  
or 1.8 B disasters  
it's all up to us.

Let us make sure to have 1.8 B opportunities.

Let us reaffirm our commitment to sustainability by measuring our progress.

And ensure the positive impact of well-managed tourism  
on inclusive and equitable growth,  
sustainable development  
and peace.

-----

**My dear friends,**

How do we know if we are going in the right direction?

We need to accurately assess our impact - economic, social and environmental.

This will only be obtained accurately and in a way that can be comparable through statistics.

There are two main reasons for this.

1. The United Nations has called for statistics to be the base of the process to define indicators for the SDGs.

The global goals that explicitly ask for more integrated policies for sustainable development.

2. Integrated policies need integrated data.

We need an integrated base for the three dimensions of sustainable tourism: economic, social and environmental.

And we need a common language (measure)

that is standardized

across destinations, countries and regions.

-----  
**Dear friends,**

With support from the United Nations Statistics Division,

UNWTO has launched an initiative towards a statistical framework that supports these aims.

A Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST).

Overall, MST will help us to  
better inform our policies on sustainable tourism  
create dialogue between different sectors  
and support better decision making.

But we can only advance if it receives your support.

Your commitment to MST is essential if we are to have a common understanding,  
to track our impact and our progress.  
to ensure we walk the talk.

-----

**Dear friends,**

We trust MST can help lead tourism into a new era of sustainable and inclusive development.

We count on your support and leadership to make this Conference a true landmark in sustainable tourism

To build a legacy going forward within this important International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

To make our sector a factor of positive change.

Thank you.