



**Opening Remarks by Mr. Michael Møller
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva
International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017
“The Way Forward – Our Journey to 2030”
Tuesday, 19 December 2017, at 14:00
Room XX, Palais des Nations**

**Mr. Secretary-General [of the UNWTO],
Madam Ineichen, State Secretary for Economic affairs of the Swiss
Conf.
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Welcome to the Palais des Nations, welcome to Geneva!

**Everything we do here is wrapped in our common roadmap: the
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

**Every action we take, every strategy we devise, every partnership
we seek – we assess each and every one by asking one question right
away: how will it help us achieve the 17 Sustainable Development
Goals?**

**Invariably, this was also the question I asked myself going into
today’s event to look back and look ahead as our year of sustainable
tourism for development draws to a close symbolically – I would
like to emphasize the word ‘symbolically’ because sustainable**

tourism for development will continue to be on our agenda, beyond the 31 December 2017.

Thinking about the relationship between tourism and the 2030 Agenda is a rich and fruitful exploration indeed.

First of all, there is the great promise of tourism to advance the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Just consider two of the main things we need to achieve to actually deliver the Agenda: One is *money* – that is, how to generate economic growth and unlock funding. Two is *mindsets* – that is, how to foster the shared global understanding that no matter where we come from, we are in this together and all of us have a responsibility to contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Tourism can deliver both: its economic might is immense; but beyond size, it's the quality of the economic growth it generates that is important: local and direct growth, benefiting the many, not just the few. And regarding the second point – changing mindsets – well that is the very product that tourism is selling. “Travelling”, as Mark Twain once put it, “is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.” However, beyond these benefits, the role of tourism is actually more ambivalent.

Take climate change – far and beyond the biggest challenge of our time. Here, tourism is both a culprit – responsible as it is for 5% of the world’s carbon footprint – and a victim. Think of ski resorts without snow, or island paradises amidst rising sea levels.

Because tourism is all of the above – agent for economic growth and cultural understanding as well as culprit and victim of environmental change – it is such a critical stakeholder in the 2030 Agenda.

The point is that the possible upside is only matched in scale by the risk of the downside.

This is why it is so important that we succeed in making tourism sustainable by making sustainable tourism economically viable, culturally accepted, and universally practiced.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) deserves great credit for tackling this head on throughout this past year.

As you look ahead, know that International Geneva is with you.

Whether you are looking for best practices to share or partners to collaborate with, Geneva – with 178 UN member state representations, over 400 NGOs, world class think tanks and universities, and over 1000 multinational companies – is the place where you can find both. I encourage you all to explore and

leverage the unique resources available here, at the operational hub of global SDG implementation.

The recent opening of the liaison office of the World Tourism Organization in Geneva has further enriched our sprawling ecosystem that has been growing ever since the creation of the Red Cross over 150 years ago. We are grateful for the fresh insights you have given Geneva – and I was encouraged to see the many ways in which Geneva has also been able to give you new connections and ideas.

This is exactly the kind partnership and collaboration that we need to foster across the board in our collective effort to make our world a better place for all.

And speaking about partnerships I cannot end my comments today without taking the opportunity to thank Secretary-General Rifai as he ends his term at the head of the UNWTO, for his sterling stewardship and for being a great partner to all of us in the UN family. I am sure that I speak on behalf of all present today in wishing him all the very best in the years ahead.

Thank you.