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Report of the Secretary-General

Part I: Current situation and activities

(a) Situation of world tourism

I. International tourism 2017

1. International tourist arrivals grew by 7% in 2017 to reach a total of 1,322 million, according to the January UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. This is well above the sustained and consistent trend of 4% or higher growth since 2010 and represents the strongest results in seven years.
2. 2017 was characterized by sustained growth in many destinations and a firm recovery in those that suffered decreases in previous years. Results were partly shaped by the global economic upswing and the robust outbound demand from many traditional and emerging source markets, particularly a rebound in tourism spending from Brazil and the Russian Federation after a few years of declines.
3. Led by Mediterranean destinations, Europe recorded extraordinary results for such a large and rather mature region, with 8% more international arrivals than in 2016. Africa consolidated its 2016 rebound with an 8% increase. Asia and the Pacific recorded 6% growth, the Middle East 5% and the Americas 3%.
4. International tourist arrivals in Europe reached 671 million in 2017, a remarkable 8% increase following a comparatively weaker 2016. Growth was driven by the extraordinary results in Southern and Mediterranean Europe (+13%). Western Europe (+7%), Northern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe (both +5%) also recorded robust growth.
5. Asia and the Pacific (+6%) recorded 324 million international tourist arrivals in 2017. Arrivals in South Asia grew 10%, in South-East Asia 8% and in Oceania 7%. Arrivals to North-East Asia increased by 3%.
6. The Americas (+3%) welcomed 207 million international tourist arrivals in 2017, with most destinations enjoying positive results. South America (+7%) led growth, followed by Central America and the Caribbean (both +4%), with the latter showing clear signs of recovery in the aftermath of



hurricanes Irma and Maria. In North America (+2%), robust results in Mexico and Canada contrasted with a decrease in the United States, the region's largest destination.

7. Based on available data for Africa, growth in 2017 is estimated at 8%. The region consolidated its 2016 rebound and reached a record 62 million international arrivals. North Africa enjoyed a strong recovery with arrivals growing by 13%, while in Sub-Saharan Africa arrivals increased by 5%.

8. The Middle East (+5%) received 58 million international tourist arrivals in 2017 with sustained growth in some destinations and a strong recovery in others.

9. Preliminary data on international tourism receipts for the first six to nine months of 2017 shows positive trends in most major source markets.

II. Prospects for 2018

10. The current strong momentum is expected to continue in 2018, though at a more sustainable pace after eight years of steady expansion following the 2009 economic and financial crisis.

11. Based on current trends, economic prospects and the outlook by the UNWTO Panel of Experts, UNWTO projects international tourist arrivals worldwide to grow at a rate of 4%-5% in 2018. This is somewhat above the 3.8% average increase projected for the period 2010-2020 by UNWTO in its Tourism Towards 2030 long-term forecast.

12. Europe and the Americas are both expected to grow by 3.5%-4.5%, Asia and the Pacific by 5%-6%, Africa by 5%-7% and the Middle East by 4%-6%.

13. Updated information on world tourism will be provided verbally to the Executive Council.

III. Action by the Executive Council

DRAFT DECISION¹

The Executive Council,

Having examined the report,

Takes note of the current situation of world tourism.

¹ This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Council, please refer to the Decisions document issued at the end of the session.