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Editorial

The present issue of the Journal of Tourism and Services contains scientific papers, working paper, and press releases.

The contributions to this issue are authored by researchers and scholars from the Australia, Bulgaria, China, Czech Republic, and the USA.

The paper of Šárka Bendová, Marie Štěpánková and Vania Kaneva deals with policy of employee engagement, corporate social responsibility, and employer branding in a service provider company. The aim of the paper is to display the connection between corporate social responsibility, employee engagement, and employee branding interface as a useful tool to improve the image and output of the company. The authors describe the corporate social responsibility policy, best practices and its impact on how to improve the situation related to employees and the global public opinion. The authors point out that the company that behaves as a responsible corporate citizen acquires people who depend on such values, and thus supports its customers.

Jana Stará and Christina Peterson conducted a literature review with the aim to identify gaps between the theoretical conceptualizations of wellness and current wellness tourism practices. The authors explore opportunities to drive market changes that more fully integrate wellness in the tourism industry. The literature review is based on Medline, Academic Search Complete, and PsychInfo databases for peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2005 -2015. The authors reviewed the articles and thematically categorized them based upon how they conceptualized wellness. The literature review has revealed five thematic areas that span across the theoretical conceptualizations of wellness.

The aim of the paper of Xueyan Xu, Noel Scott and Jun Gao is to examine Chinese and Australian tourists' visual attention during their viewing the resort brochures by using eye-tracking and self-report methods. Based on the results of the study the authors point out that cultural diversity has the significant impact on the effectiveness of print tourism advertisement. They also find that the order of page, an interaction between pages order and types of content influence subjects ocular behavior. The findings will assist businesses by providing valuable information about customer's perception of print advertising on a cross-culture perspective.

In her working paper, Petra Koudelková focuses on Christmas markets at The Old Town Square in Prague, the Czech Republic in 2016 and it provides essential details about attendance and visitors' shopping habits. Christmas markets represent an important part of cultural tourism and a niche in a scientific field.

I would also like to welcome Prof. Marjana Merkač Skok, Ph.D. the new member of the Editorial Board and express the belief that our collaboration will be fruitful and will lead to further improvement of the Journal.

Last but not least I would like to wish to all members of the Editorial Board, present and future authors, supporters, colleagues, and readers a great and sunny summer holidays!

Alžbeta Királová
Chair of the Editorial Board

CSR, Employer Branding and employee engagement in Bulgarian power company

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Abstract

The power company displays a strong policy of employee engagement, CSR, and employer branding. The interconnection of such three areas appears a one of causes of success at employees, prospective employers and stakeholders. Considering the price rise, the power company as the entity collecting money for the electricity has been considered guilty of continuous growth of prices determined by the Energy Regulator, in fact. Thanks to the growth of electricity prices, it was the one found guilty by the general public. However, the essence of the problem resides in the fact that people achieve low incomes. Thus, CSR policy help improve image of the company in all areas, which is manifested by greater employee engagement applied in the employer branding. In this article, we wish to describe the CSR policy, best practices and its impact on how to improve the situation related to employees and the global public opinion.

Key words: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Employee Engagement, Employer Branding

JEL Code: M12, M14, J53

Introduction

The objective of the article is to display the connection between corporate social responsibility (CSR), employee engagement and employer branding interface as an effective tool to improve the image and output of the company. We are going to outline that the CSR tools support the above mentioned CSR, employee engagement and employer branding, which have become essential for the company not only at critical times but also at common periods of growth. The tools helped us remedy the company image in Bulgaria, where it ended in a stalemate thanks to the accusations of the general public for constant electricity price rises. Though, the electricity prices are appraised by the Energy Regulator. Therefore, we can see the CSR policy as a fundamental tool for a majority of other strategies and policies exploited by the company.

The power company has been awarded many awards for the CSR area in Bulgaria in recent years as well as abroad. It has won prestigious prizes in the area of CSR and Employer Branding. Moreover, it has been continually strengthening the company internal relationship to its employees, which finally results in external enriched interest in work places demanded by 200 – 500 applicants per a single work place.

The power company behaves as a respected and responsible corporate citizen of Bulgaria. Because of this fact, the company applies CSR tools as one of its elementary policies in corporate business. Therefore, we are going to describe the CSR as a theory, and its relationship to Employer Branding and Employee Engagement in the theoretical part. We shall be dealing with our own application of the above-mentioned elements in the power company in the empirical part of the paper. We can see the added value of this paper in interconnection between all three above-mentioned areas and their closer description in the power company business practice.

CSR policy of the power company in Bulgaria together with the employee engagement survey executed among the power company employees have been kept at our disposal. At our sole discretion, we regard them to be our initial documents along with long-termed statistics of the quantity of applicants for a work place.

1. Theoretical Part

1.1. Definition of CSR, Employee Engagement and Employer Branding

Our research target is to provide an exhaustive compendium of definitions related to the given theme. Therefore, we have selected a certain number of definitions dealing with the corporate social responsibility, employee engagement and employer branding after our search of the literature available.

1.2 CSR as a Part of the Company Policy

The phrase “the triple bottom line” (TBL) was first coined in 1994 by John Elkington, the founder of a British consultancy called Sustain Ability. His argument was that companies should be preparing three different bottom lines. The first of his traditional measures is corporate profit. The second is the bottom line of a company’s “people” reflecting how socially responsible an organisation has been throughout its operations. The third is the bottom line of the company’s “planet”, which is a measure of how environmentally responsible it has been. The triple bottom line (TBL) thus consists of three Ps: *profit, people and planet*. It aims to measure the financial, social and environmental performance of the corporation over a period of time. Only a company that produces a TBL is taking account of the full cost involved in doing business. To some extent, the TBL is a particular manifestation of the balanced scorecard where the same fundamental principle pays: what you measure is what you get, because what you measure is what you are likely to pay attention to. Only when companies measure their social and environmental impact will we have socially and environmentally responsible organisations. These activities should be on their business agenda (Elkington, J. California Management Review 36.2, 1994, p. 90; Roddick, A. Competitiveness Review, 6(1), 1, 1996).

We address the questions of the three pillars of CSR. In each of these three pillars we state the key themes and activities which the company focus on especially. Furthermore, we indicate practical examples of the

Tab. 1: CSR Power Company Policy Application

Areas	Key Categories	Corporate Target Recipients
Economy	Company transparency and good relationships with	Investors Clients Suppliers Employees
Environment	Energy efficiency Sustainable development Environmental management	Protection of environmental resources Health and safety protection
Social Issues	Internal	Social and employment policy Development of employees Work-life balance Sports and talents
	External	Voluntary programmes Philanthropy, cooperation with the local community

Source: Authors' own processing

power company activities to point out the importance of the theme itself, and its significance for both the company, and its impact on global as well as local environment and society. Thus, we are presenting three pillars of CSR acknowledged by the power company CSR policy on basis of the following activities.

In the processed and elaborative tables below, we can see particular activities via which can CSR policy be presented. The two end columns of such activities represent the part forming the best practices for Employee Engagement (EE) and Employer Branding (EB).

Tab. 2: P-Profit Applied as an Economical Pillar in the Power Company Reality

Themes	Activities	Examples from Bulgarian Power Company
Company Management	Transparency	Financial and non-financial information publishing
	Rules of Behaviour	Ethical Code and Code of Conduct within its practical use, 7 principles of behaviour for different management levels
	Company Image	Company Image Monitoring and Measurement
Responsible Approach to the Clients	Feedback	Satisfaction Research; Claims and their solutions
	Clients Incorporated in Decision Making	Collecting proposals for company services innovations Customer Club
	Customer Service	Loyalty programme, friendly web, Customer Care, information for the customers
	Quality of Services	Usage of Quality Standards such as ISO 9001, Investors in People (IIP) and others. Awards – Stevie, Bulgarian Business Leaders Forum (BBLF) award for CSR and others
	Customer Education	Education of Health and Safety Approaches Programmes “How to save the energy and lower the bills”
Relationships with Suppliers and Other Business Partners	Selection of Suppliers	CSR as a point of view by selection of suppliers
	Feedback Monitoring	Research of satisfaction, evidence of claims
	Business Relationships	Payment of the invoices on time
	CSR Spread	Monitoring of CSR practices in the supply chains Involving suppliers into CSR activities of the power company

Marketing and Advertisement	Product Information	Clear and real information about power company services
	Shared Marketing	Marketing tool used for promotion of the power company and its charity activities
	Advertising Ethics	Taking care of ethical advertising norms and standards

Source: Authors' own processing, internal power company guidelines

Tab. 3: P-Planet Applied as an Environmental Pillar in the Power Company Reality

Themes	Activities	Examples from Bulgarian Power Company
Environmental Policy	Management	Environmental strategies, standards, audits
	Supply Chain	Criteria for selection of suppliers
	Stakeholders Initiatives	Cooperation on environmental activities, proposals for development of environmental practices
	Communication	Internal trainings of environment and power company policy
	Climate Changes	Informing our employees and clients about appropriate behaviour
Water and Energy	Energy Savings	Insulations, energy savings machines, ...
	Renewable Resources	
	Water Savings	
Garbage and Recycling	Treatment and Recycling	Paper, plastics, cartridges, etc.
	Garbage Minimization	Printing on both sides of the paper sheet, recyclable barrels for drinking water, optimization of production process
Transportation	Employee Transport	Less business trips, more video-calls, support of ecological transport to work
Purchasing	Transportation	Optimization of logistics
	Packaging Materials	Eco-friendly packaging materials, minimization of packaging materials
	Eco-purchasing	Paper, machines, cleaning liquids
	Local Producers	...

Source: Authors' own processing, internal power company guidelines

Tab. 4: P-People Applied as a Social Pillar in the Power Company Reality

Themes	Activities	Examples from Bulgarian Power Company
Employees Involvement and Communication	Feedback	Satisfaction survey, evidence and solution of claims
	Involvement into Decision Making	Collection of proposals for better functioning of the company; Influence of employees on CSR focus and related activities
	Internal Communication	Internal communication about how each employee is responsible in his/her life for the environment
Salary and Appraisals	Fixed Salary	Base pay + “Remuneration for Length of Service” amounting to 1%
	Bonuses and Benefits	3M bonus, food vouchers, medical services, additional days of paid sick leave, Social Fund, etc.
Employee Education	Education and Professional Development	Further education, internship programmes, support of Bachelor/Master/or PhD. degrees; English certificates, EU educational projects, etc.
Health and Safety	Company Policy	Rules, education, trainings, ..., Health Club, etc.
	Medical Services	Prophylactics, extra pay for medical service, etc.
Work-life Balance	Flexible Working Hours Forms	Shift work, ...
	Care of Children, Seniors, or Ill Persons	Sick lists for the possibility to take care of the family Company psychologist and general practitioner
	Social Programmes	Tourism, free time activities, etc. Company Club & Friends
	Employees on Maternity Leave	Stay in touch with your employees during the leave; Support by coming back to work
Outplacement	Redundant Employees' Support	Financial support Help with finding a new job Requalification and further training
Fair Opportunities	Measures against Discrimination	Fair and equal opportunities for everyone
	Diversity Management	Respecting different cultures, genders and religions
Community Support	Company Charity	Financial or physical support, giving something for free, lending company meeting rooms for beneficiary activities, etc.

	Company Voluntarism	Employees working voluntarily in the course of their standard working hours for a “case”; The case could be identified as by themselves
	Company Investment into Community	Long-term investments into the community where the company concentrates its business activities
	Commercial Community Activities	Shared marketing Sponsorship
	Company Projects	Own charity project
Cooperation with Schools	Cooperation with Students	Internships, excursion, guided tours Consultation and tuition of thesis Support of students activities
	Support of Education	Lending of technical equipment Leading educational processes Lecturers from the Power Company National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, the Certified Technical Training Programme
Stakeholders' Engagement	Employee Engagement	Company voluntarism Beneficial events where employees take part in
	Client Engagement	Involved into CSR company activities
	Business Partners' Engagement	Involved into CSR company activities

Source: Authors' own processing, internal power company guidelines

For the purpose of this paper, with regard to the CSR application in Bulgarian environment, we will use the definition provided by European Commission (EC). Thus, CSR is defined as: “*the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society*” (European Commission, 2011, p. 6). The European Union (EU) encourages companies to adopt CSR strategies. It can be argued that these strategies are instruments for the implementation of some of the EU Social Chapter policies. Examples of this use of CSR include, inter alia, EU policies and legislation related to consumer and employee protection, environmental protection, human rights, and so on (Dvořáková, Z., et al., 2014, p. 163 - 196). To give another CSR structure, the CSR shall be generally classified in three pillars such as environmental, social and economic. We will be using this

particular structure hereinafter in the empirical part of the paper where based on this concept we will sort out current practices of the power company into individual groups.

1.3 Definition of Employee Engagement

William Kahn provided the first formal definition of employee engagement as *“the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”* (Kahn, W., 1990).

1.4 Definition of Employer Branding

Power industry is considered rather a specific field for employers having specific requirements on their human resources. Employers battle a variety of barriers. According to McNabb et al. (2006) aging workforce and a lack of skilled and professional workers constitute the main challenge (McNabb et al., 2006; Hansen, 2008). The power industry also faces competition for the same limited labour pool with other industries that employ people with similar skill sets (Hansen, 2008). The term “employer brand” was first introduced by Tim Ambler and Simon Barrow in London Business School in 1996. They defined the employer brand as *“the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company”*. The relationship between company and employee provides a series of exchanges of mutual benefit (Ambler and Barrow, 1996).

In general, a brand can be defined as a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of them, meant to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from competitors’ goods or services (Kotler and Keller, 2009). An employer brand offers the same benefits to employees as a product brand offers to consumers, including developmental and/or useful activities (functional), material or monetary rewards (economic) and feelings such as belonging, direction and purpose (psychological) (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). Employer branding applies marketing principles to human resource (HR) activities in relation to current and potential employees (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010).

Employer brands are built to be consistent with the company’s product and corporate brand (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). The main focus in the use of employer branding has been on developing a distinctive potential employees (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010).

1.5 Hypothesis

We assume that all above-mentioned corporate policies referred to

above, i.e. CSR, Employee Engagement and Employer Branding, have a joint intersection found in activities, which can be commonly identified as Best Practices at all three corporate disciplines, and should necessarily be represented on the business agenda.

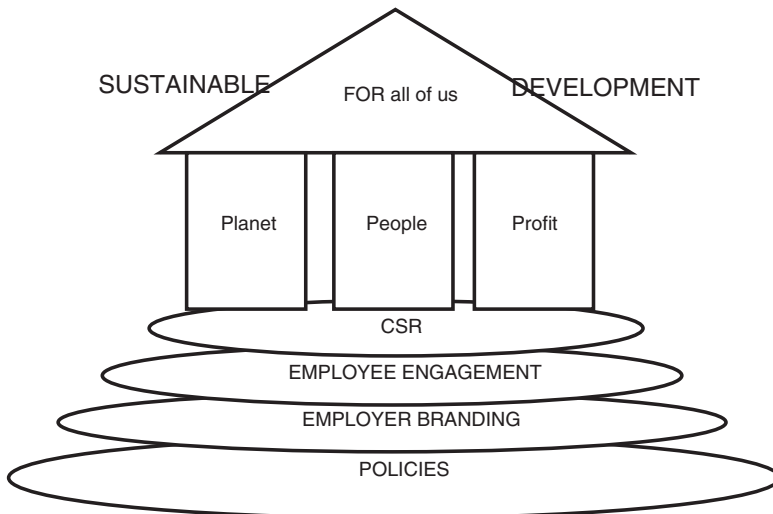
2. Empirical Part

2.1 Methods

Data Resources to Specify CSR Practices

We have drawn our fundamental data and statistics from corporate quantitative records, internal statistical records as well as structured interviews with HR managers, or executives. To give an example, the data contains information such as how many applicants do apply for a single working position, which particular internal corporate policies were exercised to enhance the production output, etc. Overall data have actively been operated with CSR, Employee Engagement and Employer Branding including data collected from high schools, colleges and universities, and forms an integral part of the internal corporate policy of the power company. To our wonder, potential candidates apply for job positions at the power company even though the image of the corporation has been considered rather harmed in Bulgaria. Consequently, we have anticipated that people apply for work places due to the fact that the power company must have been a respectable employer.

Fig. 1: Cohesion in Corporate Policies between CSR, Employee Engagement and Employer Branding



Source: Authors' own processing

2.2 Cohesion between CSR, Employee Engagement and Employer Branding

The fact how cohesion between individual corporate policies integrated with 3Ps works is depicted in the Fig. 1 above. The company takes profits by behaving as a responsible corporate citizen, a smart economist in face of the planet, acquires people who depend on such values, and thus supports its customers. Engaged employees then get information on such companies by means of employer branding. Overall effort has become an integral part of the corporate policies, which conform to the statutory legislation. Does that appear as a science fiction? No, not to us at all, we are ready to demonstrate such a reality on the power company operating in Bulgaria, for instance. Overall resources have originated from the power company corporate directives and policies.

3. Conclusion

At an example of a single company running its business in the power industry in Bulgaria, we have pointed out that in so far as the symbiosis between Corporate Social Responsibility, Employee Engagement and Employer Branding is concerned, we are able to exhaust plenty of these conceptions on basis of suitably formulated corporate policies and their initiation into real practice. Nowadays, we can even claim that we consider these corporate policies a necessity to be applied.

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Understanding the Concept of Wellness for the Future of the Tourism Industry: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Wellness tourism is a new and fast growing trend on the global tourism market that brings new changes to the client base by offering novel services and products and attracting new providers into the traditional tourism and spa field. Some researchers argue that the common use of the term wellness is at odds with its deeper philosophical and theoretical roots. To understand the evolution and future of wellness tourism, a literature review was conducted that aimed to identify gaps between the theoretical conceptualizations of wellness and current wellness tourism practices, and explore opportunities to drive market changes that more fully integrate wellness in its deeper meaning, instead of being just a trendy marketing label.

Key words: wellness, wellness tourism, definition of wellness, wellness industry, spa

JEL Classification: I19, O19

1. Introduction

Health and wellness tourism is now an established international trend for health-conscious consumers looking to improve their welfare. As defined by the Global Wellness Institute (2013), wellness tourism is travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal well-being. The institute consequently describes a 'Primary Purpose Wellness Traveler' as someone for whom wellness is the sole purpose or motivating factor for their trip and destination choice, where a 'Secondary Purpose Wellness Traveler' is someone who seeks to maintain wellness while taking any type of trip. According to the Global Wellness Economy Monitor from January 2017, the sum of expenditures related to wellness tourism has risen to \$563 billion. Travelers made 691 million wellness trips in 2015, an increase of 104.4 million trips from 2013. Wellness trips account for 6.5% of all tourism trips, but represent 15.6% of total tourism expenditures. This is because wellness travelers are high-yield tourists,

spending much more per trip than non-wellness travelers (Global Wellness Institute, 2017).

The growing wellness industry is gaining recognition globally for many reasons. For instance, researchers point out the potential economic and societal impacts the industry could make by increasing small business development (Page et al., 2017) or minimizing the cost of caring for the rising number of senior citizens (Aluculesei & Nistoreanu, 2016). Theories abound as to the reasons for the exponential growth of the wellness market, many of which cite the anomie of western, capitalist societies, the breakdown of traditional religions, and the fragmentation of communities (Smith & Kelly, 2006).

The countries with the most significant wellness tourism markets and tourist movement are primarily located in Europe (mostly in German-speaking and Mediterranean countries), North America and Southeast Asia (Csirmaz & Pető, 2015). The rise of wellness tourism has been in strong in the spa industry, in which it is now deeply rooted (Global Spa Summit, 2010), and has been characterized by a variety of services termed 'wellness treatments.' Notably, only some providers are offering the complete range of services currently offered by spas destination, and even fewer provide services across the full spectrum of wellness (Joukes & Gerry, 2010; Stănciulescu, Diaconescu, & Diaconescu, 2015).

The changing client profile has forced wellness providers to adapt the means they employ to establish a growing and loyal client base (Joukes & Gerry, 2010). A substantial body of research is dedicated to the motivations (Kim, Chiang, & Tang, 2016; Kucukusta & Denizci Guillet, 2014), segmentation (Chen, Liu, & Chang, 2013), and factors influencing the satisfaction (Loureiro, Almeida, & Rita, 2013) of wellness customers, including the spiritual and social aspects of wellness travel (Matheson, Rimmer, & Tinsley, 2014; Wearing & McGehee, 2013; Willson, McIntosh, & Zahra, 2013). Findings from such research brings the industry closer to the theoretical understandings of the complex trends in wellness tourism. For managers and workers in the wellness sector, this type of research helps to better understand visitor motivation and satisfaction, while at a broader level, the role wellness plays in destination choice, and product and industry development (Filep, 2017).

Wellness tourism targets healthy people with a proactive interest in maintaining or enhancing their health. Wellness consumers seek to look and feel better, lose weight, slow the effects of aging, improve pain or discomfort, manage stress, or improve health through the use of natural supplements such as vitamins and minerals (Stănciulescu et al., 2015). Concurrently, the latest progress in science and medicine has led to better preservation of the body and prevents the onset of disease. However, mental, psychological and emotional problems are often left untreated (Smith & Kelly, 2006). This approach reduces wellness simply to the sale of products, services, and treatments at hotels, spas or therapy establishments and focuses mostly on physical health, reflecting a myopic

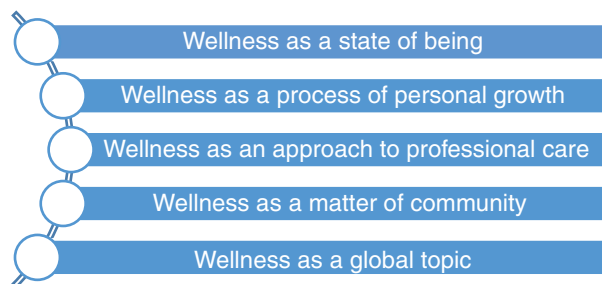
understanding of wellness (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Joukes & Gerry, 2010; Stănciulescu et al., 2015). In order to qualify as a contemporary wellness tourism experience, Smith and Kelly (2006) contend that, “some deliberate contribution has to be made to psychological, spiritual or emotional well-being in addition to physical. This takes wellness tourism from the realm of being merely a passive form of tourism with a focus on escapism to one where tourists are purposefully driven by the desire to actively seek enhanced wellness (p.2).”

As several of the above cited authors mentioned, not all forms of current wellness tourism offer cover the full spectrum of the wellness demand. In many cases the term wellness is being used as a trendy marketing label for random “feel-good services.” Hence, the purpose of this study is to identify gaps between the theoretical conceptualizations of wellness and current wellness tourism practices, and explore opportunities to drive market changes that more fully integrate wellness in its deeper meaning.

2. Materials and Methods

The following literature review is based on a search of Medline, Academic Search Complete, and PsychInfo databases for peer reviewed journal articles published in English between 2005-2015. The review searched for the term “wellness” in the title with the words “definition” and “model” in all sections. The search returned 478 papers. The paper titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevance to the study. Thirty-one papers were ultimately selected for inclusion based upon their direct investigation of the definition or concept of wellness and included literature reviews, theoretical analyses, and empirical studies. Additional texts were included in the review based on their historical significance to the understanding of wellness or ability to provide context to the current discussion. The authors reviewed the articles and thematically categorized them based upon how they conceptualized wellness.

Figure 1: Major themes resulting from review of literature on wellness



3. Results

The current literature, spanning multiple disciplines, reveals five main conceptualizations of wellness: wellness as a state of being or outcome, wellness as a process, wellness as an approach to professional care, wellness as a matter of community and wellness as a global topic.

3.1 Wellness as a state of being

Wellness as a state of being has its origins in early definitions of the word as an antonym for illness; if one is not ill, he is well (Miller, 2005). This dichotomous thinking shifted to a graduated continuum of health states from poor to positive, which intersect with one's biological, physical, political, economic and social environment, where the goal is a positive state of health and peak wellness (Dunn, 1959b; Millar & Hull, 1997). In this thematic conceptualization of wellness, both illness and wellness are subjective experiences of health (Gatchel & Kishino, 2012). Along this health continuum, "high-level wellness" is the positive side of the continuum, beyond a neutral disease free state or illness state (Travis & Ryan, 2004). Later conceptualizations of this continuum involve three parts, with health being the neutral characteristic free from the symptoms of disease, and wellness and illness at the positive and negative ends (Els & De la Rey, 2006). Elaborating on this meaning of wellness as a state of being, Myers (1992) argues that where health consists of social, spiritual, emotional and physical components, wellness is a positive state of being where these components are all functioning optimally with balance and harmony.

3.2 Wellness as a process of personal growth

Others describe wellness as a dynamic process of personal growth and adopting behaviors in multiple dimensions that improve functioning, rather than a fixed state or outcome (Travis & Callander, 1990). In this conceptualization, health is considered a state of being, while wellness is the process of being or becoming that moves one along a path toward realizing their full potential (Dunn, 1961; Jonas, 2005). Being well means taking a conscious, integrated approach to self-improvement that improves functioning to fully engage in life. For instance, rather than wait for a disease state to become apparent and rely on a clinician to treat the disease, wellness is aimed toward a process of improving self-reliance and self-care to achieve one's full potential (Ardell, 1977; Dunn, 1959b; Jonikas et al., 2013; Kirkland, 2014; Roscoe, 2009). Individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for their own self-care and to embrace active lifestyle changes that promote health in the physical, social, mental, and spiritual realms (Miller, 2005). The implication of this meaning of wellness is that experiencing wellness is not dependent on being free from symptoms, illness or disease as implied by the "wellness as a state beyond absence of disease"

definition. Individuals with chronic diseases or disabilities may also live a wellness lifestyle and strive toward a self-determined experience of optimal physical, mental, and social functioning (Gatchel & Kishino, 2012).

3.3 Wellness as an approach to professional care

Wellness is also conceptualized as an approach to “whole-person” care within the medical context. This wellness approach to medical care was first articulated by Halbert Dunn (1958) as a critique of the dominant biomedical model of patient care that fragments the mind, body and spirit of an individual into separate components to be serviced by distinct professional disciplines. The wellness approach is a paradigm shift away from the biomedical model and considers the mind, body and spirit to be integrated entities, emphasizing strengths and empowerment over disease and functional limitations (Breen, Green, Roarty, & Saggars, 2008; Dunn, 1959a; Strout & Howard, 2015). As Bishop & Yardley (2010) assert, focusing on risks or deficits imply an inability to experience wellness and may negatively impact one’s motivation to strive toward wellness. Emphasizing functional abilities and strengths leaves space for individuals to have a chronic illness or disability, and still consider themselves well. The wellness approach allows people to find meaning in an illness, drawing attention to internal imbalance and opportunities to regain balance (Briggs, Akos, Czyszczonek, & Eldridge, 2011; Epstein, Senzou, & Lemberger, 2009). The principles of the wellness approach include person-centered care that respects each individual’s values, autonomy, motives and preferences so that the locus of power is with the individual, not the practitioner (McMahon, O’Shea, Tapsell, & Williams, 2014; Reeve, 2006; Swarbrick, 2006). Wellness goals are identified by the individual with a focus on internal motivation and active participation in what the person can do, rather than their limitations or deficits (Silva-Smith et al., 2011; Swarbrick, 2006).

3.4 Wellness as a matter of community

The wellness approach also champions the use of multidisciplinary care teams that create safe, non-judgmental environments (Gatchel & Kishino, 2012; Swarbrick, 2006). Collaborative partnerships with patients, families and communities are central to addressing needs in the multiple dimensions of wellness, with medical interventions subsumed within the larger wellness approach as needed (Breen et al., 2008; Roscoe, 2009; Swarbrick, 2006). At the community level, participatory research, assessment, planning, and evaluation methods are an extension of the individual wellness approach that increase community ownership, support capacity-building efforts and empower often marginalized groups such as youth, minorities, and the elderly to sustain wellness efforts and improve the effectiveness of interventions (Rasmus, 2014; Russell-Mayhew, Arthur, & Ewashen, 2007; Stacciarini et al., 2011).

3. 5 Wellness as a global topic

It is important to note that the concept of wellness is not modern in its meaning, but mostly in its terminology and operationalization in the Western (U.S. and European) context. The European roots of wellness can be traced almost 2,000 years back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (Myers & Sweeney, 2008), however, the tenets underlying wellness can be found also in the ancient civilizations of Asia and Orient (Global Wellness Institute, 2013; Heung & Kucukusta, 2013). The view of wellness as balance and harmony of one's multiple components is shared with that of many Native American, Alaskan Native and Pacific Islander's understanding of positive health (Limb & Hodge, 2008). The growing interest in wellness is parallel to the growing interest in Eastern philosophies and the therapies offered in various countries, such as hamam in Turkey, shiatsu and onzen (hot springs) in Japan, Chinese acupuncture, reflexology, tui-na and tai chi in China, ayurvedic practices in India, and traditional Thai massage in Thailand (Smith and Kelly, 2006). Considering the Oriental cultural beliefs, such techniques support the idea that man is solely responsible for the achievement of a state of well-being through adopting behaviors that control stress, maintain real connections with others, and sustain physical activity. In contrast, in the West, even if this mentality is known and people try to apply it, it is often done mechanically and without an in depth understanding of its meaning due to the cultural differences. (Stănciulescu et al., 2015)

4. Conclusion

Wellness as a model of human functioning is a multidimensional framework where the individual, social and cultural aspects intertwine. In the case of wellness tourism, it represents a new niche where current needs of the modern population can be met. Understanding and embracing the concept of wellness, as outlined in this review, might offer a broader spectrum of ideas for further development of the wellness tourism industry and potential products and services that current wellness travelers seek globally.

The literature review has revealed five thematic areas that span across the theoretical conceptualizations of wellness and as such provide an umbrella understanding for wellness in the tourism industry, as well as in many other areas where the modern wellness trend is rapidly growing.

4.1 Wellness as a state of being

Wellness broadens the original understanding of health, aiming for a multidimensional balance in the given situation, rather than a state free from disease. This notion of wellness as positive health invites the

curative spa to enrich services that enhance individuals subjectively perceived well-being, such as relaxation techniques, communication training or various practices from positive psychology.

4.2 Wellness as a process of personal growth

Changes in one's state of wellness can be seen also as a process of personal growth and adoption of healthier lifestyle habits, which requires conscious activity on the side of the client. This approach empowers an individual to adjust to the given situation of his life and fully engage in it, despite his or her actual state of health. Such understanding of wellness calls for consumer-driven services that are based on what the client actually needs, wants or perceives as interesting or effective. A combination of these creates an individual wellness plan that should have a long-term outlook to support the ongoing process of behavioral change, and can be an enrichment to one-off pleasure-oriented treatments.

4.3 Wellness as an approach to professional care

A person-centered approach is essential to the wellness-oriented professional care, as in spa and hotel facilities, but also in hospitals, therapy and coaching, counseling, teaching and many other helping professions. This can be seen as the connecting piece for multidisciplinary teams of professionals that care for the individual in all aspects of his well-being, not just the physical and mental part, but also the spiritual and social. Also, it provides a framework for professional growth of the wellness staff who shouldn't just focus on one area of expertise, but become aware of the interconnectedness of various aspects of wellness and wellness services.

4.4 Wellness as a matter of community

Promoting the social component of wellness as an experience possible to all humans, not just the healthy and rich, allows for engaging new social groups that are now left untreated by the general wellness offerings in the tourism context – elderly persons, minorities, youngsters, etc. This broader understanding of wellness would open the private wellness centers to the local communities, becoming places where everybody can come to feel better.

4.5 Wellness as a global topic

The topics of self-responsibility and maintaining balance in all aspects of life is familiar to many spiritual and healing traditions around the globe. They are also central to the original wellness concept. As the tourism

industry attracts people to travel the world, it also invites people from all over the world to travel to our local wellness centers. Wellness, as an internationally recognized term can then create a common language or framework that connects traditional local treatments with practices like yoga or chi-kung and translates them into the language and daily practices of modern clients. And it can do so with respect to their historical and cultural background, because at the general level, everybody wants a healthy, happy and satisfying life, no matter where they have travelled to or from.

Understanding the meaning of the wellness, although very theoretical at first sight, helps management of wellness facilities to position themselves on the wellness market by consciously choosing to which wellness demands they will respond and with which services and products. A proactive approach to wellness tourism would not only address the current trends on the market, but would also create offerings that help individuals feel better in the broader sense of wellness.

The human desire to be well can be met not only through spa treatments and wellness oriented products, but also services that have not been traditional in the spa setting, such as communication courses, family days, silence hours, or creativity workshops. Another option is introducing the position of a wellness coach in spa settings who could give initial assessment, guidance, and sustained motivation to new clients while providing continuity to returning clients with respect to their wellness path. Even if the offering is focused on activities that are predominantly physical, wellness providers should be aware of the spiritual, psychological or holistic dimensions of the experiences and consciously use them in the strategic planning or market positioning. The term "wellness" has already been used as a marketing label for various services across the world. Understanding the broader meaning wellness allows for further use in promotion activities like external marketing for labeling services and treatments that could be otherwise seen by customers as too spiritual or uncommon (as tai-chi, meditation, thai massage and others); but also in the internal marketing for creating a shared vision of the institution or a common ground for the professional (and personal) growth of the staff.

As Stănciulescu and her colleagues (2015) conclude, "Wellness tourism is much broader; it addresses the complexity of human and penetrates beyond the material barriers, which is essential in restoring the human being (balance on physical, emotional, mental and spiritual plans,) by inducing a state of well-being (p. 159)."

The broader meaning of wellness encompasses the cultural, societal, economic, demographic and individual differences and offers a concept that is applicable globally, across diverse populations and communities. As the use of the term is already widespread, it is important to understand what the term means, which carries the potential to open the wellness tourism market to customers and investors who haven't yet discovered it.

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Cultural influences on viewing tourism advertising: An eye-tracking study comparing Chinese and Australian tourists

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Abstract

In a globalized tourism industry, tourism advertising material must cater to a multi-cultural audience. This paper examines Chinese and Australian tourists' visual attention during their viewing the resort brochures by using eye-tracking and self-report methods. The results demonstrate: (1) cultural diversity has significantly impact on the effectiveness of print tourism advertisement; (2) both of the subjects from these two counties share some similarities in reading habits; and(3) the order of page, interaction between pages order and types of content influence subjects ocular behavior. The findings will assist businesses by providing important information about customer's perception of print advertising on a cross-culture perspective.

Keywords: Advertising effectiveness, cultural values, eye-tracking

JEL Classification M3

1. Introduction

The number of tourists is predicted by 2020 to reach 1.4 billion with the majority of this growth coming from non-English speaking countries (UNWTO, 2014) and with a non-European cultural background. Tourist

experience of cultural difference has recently gained growing interests. Tourists from different linguistic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds need to be served differ and it is essential to improve intercultural communication on the basis of shared universal values (Luka, Vinklere, 2 Vaidesvarans, 2010).

Visual appeal is a crucial part of human's information processing, furthermore, visuals can add meaning to something that is basically neutral (An, 2007). Many international tourism destinations and companies gradually come to realize the necessity to evaluate the efficacy of their advertising. While due to the intangibility of tourism product, tourism marketers rely heavily on visuals stimuli, such as imagery, visual associations, drawings and painting, visual memory devices, symbols and so on (Wang, 2 Sparks, 2016). The effectiveness of an advertisement is not simply limited to the purchase of tourism product and service but rather is extended to a range of psychological and cognitive aspects related to awareness and intention which may have a long term impact on the purchase decision (Kim, Hwang, 2 Fesenmaier, 2005).

However, it is hard to detect and evaluating tourists responses to advertising campaigns by traditional methods. A variety of approaches have been used to assess the effectiveness of those visual components using in tourism advertisements, overwhelmingly based on the use of self-report measures. Studies have examined online travel agency websites (Chiou, Lin, 2 Perng, 2001) and print ad experiments (Walters, Sparks & Herington, 2007). A variety of self-report methods have been used including asking individuals to provide open-ended comments, rate their emotional state on a set of affective items verbally or using cartoon-like figures, or using moment-to-moment written rating. Self-report measures of these types are used to collect psychological attitudes and opinions because of their easy interpretability, richness of information, respondent reporting motivation, causal force, and sheer practicality (Paulhus, 2 Vazire, 2009).

Despite their frequent usage however, self-report methods suffer from many measurement artifacts. Standard written copy tests do not perform well for emotional advertising as is commonly found in tourism (Hazlett, 2 Hazlett, 1999). Verbal or written response measures are limited in their ability to tap a person's emotional experiences and are retrospective, the respondent needs to think back to remember what they felt, and are susceptible to social demand influences.

One of the most commonly used methods to measure emotional states has been Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) PAD model, which measures respondents' emotional state on the dimensions of pleasure, arousal, and dominance (Russo, 1978). Bradley and Lang's Self-Assessment Manikan (SAM) modified the PAD using cartoon-like visuals in an effort to better measure affective responses (Manthiou, Ayadi, Lee, Chiang, 2 Tang, 2017). Although the SAM has been better able to capture responses to affective stimuli, it still relies on post-hoc self report measures. In an effort to more objectively capture consumer response in real time, this study

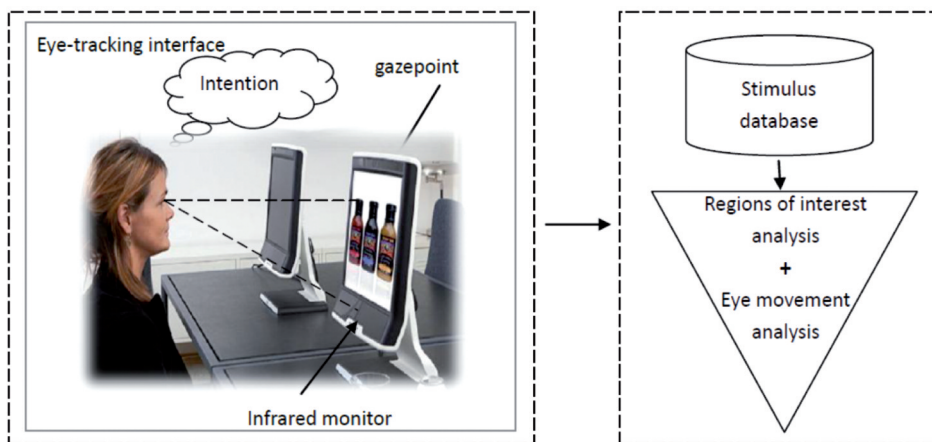
collects multiple measures of advertising effectiveness and uses eye-tracking to indicate attention and interest to both the overall advertisement and the components of it.

1.1 Eye-tracking research

The human senses collect large amounts of information but the brain can only process a small percentage of this stimuli. The brain deals with this information overload by using selective attention. Research into how the human eye moves began in the early 1900s and the same techniques have been used to determine how people respond to marketing stimuli. Consumers have to move their eyes to process a specific object or location in a visual marketing stimulus (Manthiou, Ayadi, Lee, Chiang, 2 Tang, 2017) This is required because acuity across the retina of the human eye rapidly falls off with increased eccentricity from the fovea, which is the central and most sensitive part of the retina directly opposite of the lens. Therefore studying eye movements provides insight into visual information acquisition behavior (Wang & Sparks, 2016; Hyökki, 2012; Hernández-Méndez & Muñoz-Leiva, 2015).

In recent years eye-tracking has been broadly used in marketing, cognitive sciences, human computer interaction. There has been a rapid growth in commercial applications of eye-tracking technology in the United States and Europe, which can assistant the companies render their visual marketing efforts more effective and track closely what consumers see (Pieters, Rosbergen, 2 Wedel, 1999). By using eye-tracking

Graph 1 **The principle of eye-tracking experiments using a Tobii T60 Eye Tracker**



Source: Author drawing

methodology, advertisement effectiveness can be studied in e.g. copy testing, images, video and graphics (Duchowski, 2002).

Eye-tracking provides objective information (Sundstedt, 2012) and a rich understanding of people's reading behavior and reactions to words and pictures by allowing eye-movements to be tracked and replayed in real time or in slow-motion (Rayner, Rotello, Stewart, Keir & Duffy, 2001) (see Graph 1). One limitation is that subjects' eye movements and metrics may not reflect underlying cognitive processes. Eye-tracking research can answer "what" and "how" questions about the subjects' ocular behavior, but not "why" and needs to be combined with other methods such as self-report questionnaire or an interview to obtain full information (Samiee & Jeong, 1994; Walters, Sparks & Herington, 2007). This study intends to introduce a cognitive insight into the effectiveness of print ads by using Tobii T60 Eye Tracker.

1.2 Cultural values in advertising

Culture is viewed by many as the "soft" aspect of international marketing, but is important in order to convince potential customers to purchase a client's product or service, the advertiser needs to comply with a public's value system rather than run against it (Holbrook, Weiss, 2002). To understand cultural differences is often considered a prerequisite for successful international advertising (Byeong-Joon & Jain, 2001). The reason is that consumers grow up in a particular culture and become accustomed to that culture's value systems, beliefs, and perception processes.

The literature in cross-cultural advertising can be mainly divided into three groups: the majority of studies that focus on advertising content, studies that probe attitudes toward and/or perception of advertising, and studies that investigate standardization issues across cultures. The main objective in cross-cultural research is to detect similarities and/or differences from various samples (Samiee & Jeong, 1994). In recent decades, researchers in marketing have begun to use Hofstede's model of culture as a framework to investigate the cross-cultural influence, which structures four dimensions on which societies differ (see Table 1): individualism (IDV), power distance (PDI), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), and masculinity (MAS) (Hofstede, 1980). In 1983, Hofstede examined 50 countries and 3 regions on his four cultural dimensions and gave scores to each one of them (Sorge, 1983). Hall (1973) proposed that the group consisting of the US, the UK and Australia represents occidental cultures, characterized by low power distance, high individualism, low uncertainty avoidance, low masculinity and low information context culture. In contrast, the other group, consisting of Japan, China and Korea is highly representative of oriental cultures, characterized by high power distance, low individualism, high uncertainty avoidance, high masculinity and high information context (Harris, Hall & Oye, 1973). Fernandez, Denise Rotondo Carlson, Dawn S, Stepina, Lee P, Nicholson, Joel D (1997) reexamine the value

Table 1: Hofstede`s four dimension

	Hofstede`s explanation	values share in high score countries
individualism(IDV)	individual decision making and actions are encouraged	live separately, "I" – by society consciousness ,relationship prevails over task
power distance(PDI)	power difference are accepted and sanctioned by society.	people with power to look as powerful as possible, face matters
uncertainty avoidance(UAI)	society is unwilling to accept cope with uncertainty	need for security
masculinity(MAS)	traditional male values are important to a society.	productivity, try to be the best, big and fast considered beautiful

Source: Hofstede (2001)

structures from several of Hofstede`s original countries considering the shifts of major environment changes (Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina & Nicholson, 1997). Recent marketing researches have begun to use Hofstede`s four culture dimensions as a framework to test cross-cultural differences. Researchers show great interests in such differences because values are of central concern in understanding consumer behavior (Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina & Nicholson, 1997; Vinson, Scott & Lamont, 1977). Many studies have addressed this important aspect of culture in relation to how different culture system affects actual consumer responses to print advertising. (Yong, 1996).

Moving beyond past research, this study is significant in that it can reveal the visual discrepancies between oriental and occidental markets in tourism advertising. On the practical side, this research will provide suggestions on culture-based advertising. In addition, to the researcher`s knowledge, this is the first empirical study to examine the visual components of print tourism advertising within two international markets.

2. Problem Formulation

2.1 Research questions

As the main objective of this study is to extent that culture values do influence the effectiveness of print tourism advertising. Some attempts were made to see whether there were clear differences and similarities between China and Australia when viewing print tourism advertisement.

What are the typical similarities between Chinese and Australia subjects when viewing tourism advertisement?

What are the main differences between Chinese and Australia subjects when viewing tourism advertisement?

Do the eye movements of the subjects vary according to culture values theory or other variable

2.2 Hypotheses on culture values

Since the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2001) and Hall (1973) propose that Australia which represents occidental cultures, characterized by high individualism(IDV), low power distance(PDI), uncertainty avoidance(UAI), masculinity(MAS) and information context culture, whereas China is highly representative of oriental cultures, characterized by high power distance(PDI), uncertainty avoidance(UAI), low individualism(IDV) and high information context.

As such cultural values, norms and characteristics are also embedded in advertising appeals. The proceeding consideration helped to suggest our hypotheses. For the lack of materials, masculinity(MAS) appeal didn't include in this study.

Individualism (IDV)

H1: Advertising indicates individualism appeals work more effective in high IDV score counties.

H1a: In China, advertising indicates *collective* elicits more positive response.

H1b: In Australia, advertising indicates *independence* elicits more positive response.

H1c: In China, advertising indicates *live collectively* elicits more positive response.

H1d: In Australia, advertising indicates *live separately* elicits more positive response.

Power distance (PDI)

H2: Advertising indicates power distance appeals work more effective in high PDI score counties.

H2a: In China, advertising indicates *luxury* elicit more positive response.

H2b: In Australia, advertising indicates *cheap* elicits more positive response.

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)

H3: Advertising indicates uncertainty avoidance appeals work more effective in high UAI score counties.

H3a: In China, advertising indicates *safe* elicit more positive response.

H3b: In Australia, advertising indicates *adventure* elicits more positive response.

2.3 Method

This research focuses on ocular behavior on brochure materials by using eye movement metrics and scan path analysis. Our study aims to test the determinants of eye movement behavior on a tourist ad and evaluate the effectiveness of an advertising program after it has been designed and implemented.

2.4 Procedure

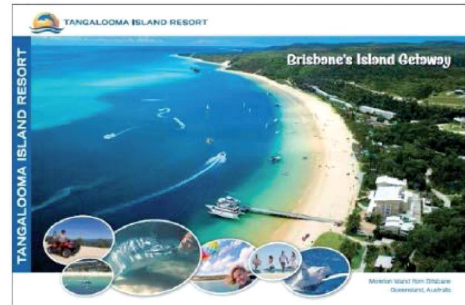
This study used a combination of survey, eye-tracking methodology to understand tourists` experiences of the brochure. The experiment was conducted over five days in July 2014 in an isolated room on Tangalooma island resort, so that participants could not be distracted. Participants were 54 (30 Australian, 24 Chinese) tourists, who volunteered to participant in this experiment.

During the experiment, all the participants were seated at a standard computer workstation with a Tobii T60 Eye-Tracker, keyboard, and mouse. Each participant was instructed to view 1 brochure (test

Graph 2: Tangalooma island resort official brochure (a) Chinese version (b) English version



a)



b)

Graph 3: Examples of the stimuli on culture value hypotheses : (a),(b),(c) for IDV study, (c) also for PDI study,(d) for UAI study



a)



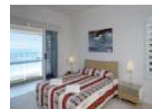
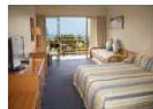
b)



c)



d)



Source: the official brochure of Tanglooma

brochures were prepared in two languages, (see Graph 2), together with 10 pairs of pictures which were selected from the brochure purposely (see Graph 3). Participants viewed all these stimuli at their own path while their eye movements were recorded. When viewing 10 pairs of pictures, subjects were asked which one was their favorite.

2.5 Dependent variables

We used eye-tracker software to divide each advertisement into specific areas of interests (AOI). Then eye-tracker collected eye movement data on each AOI included total fixation duration, first fixation duration, total fixation count, saccade count, etc (see Table 2). Fixation duration was calculated the sum of the total time spent on all stimuli. Measures of fixation duration (length of time a person stops to stimulus) and fixation count (number of times a person stops to stimulus, including return fixations) were also obtained. For each of the measures, analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted.

Table 2: Main eye tracking measures

Area of Interest (AOI)c	A specific delineated area analyzed and compared in eye-tracking software.
First Fixation Duration – seconds	Measures the duration of the first fixation on an AOI or an AOI group.
Fixation duration-seconds	Measures the duration of each individual fixation within an AOI.
Total fixation duration-seconds	Sum of the duration for all fixations within an AOI.
Fixation count	The number of times the participant fixates on an AOI or an AOI group.
Saccade count	The number of times the participant saccade on an AOI or an AOI group. A saccade is defined as the interval of time between the first fixation on the AOI and the next fixation outside the AOI.
Saccade duration-seconds	Measures the duration of each individual saccade within an AOI.

Source: Tobii Pro Studio manual

3. Results

3.1 Overall results on looking time and number of fixations

First of all, the average amount time spent looking at the brochures is

Table 3: Total fixation time(s) on Brochures

	Chinese Version mean	content	English Version mean	content
P1	52"129	cover page	1'04"769	cover page
P2	38"219	Discover:Resort Facilities	51"444	Discover:Resort Facilities
P3	39"467	Experience:wild animals	45"353	Experience:wild animals
P4	51"62	Adventure:80 activities	1'06"888	Adventure:80 activities
P5	1'06"170	Relax:Accommodation	1'31"399	Relax:Accommodation
P6	57"423	Food and Beverage	1'00"230	Accommodation Packages(show rates)
P7	33"54	Wedding	1'47"657	Day Cruises Packages(show rates)
P8	1'22"697	How to get there(maps and schedule)	46"8	How to get there(maps and schedule)
Total	7'34"480		9'52"180	

shown in Table 3. As we seen, from the beginning of the test, all the subjects spent relatively more time on the first pages than others, although the first page had less information. Moreover, Australian participants spent significantly more time looking at the brochures than the Chinese did. Table 3 also demonstrates that more time was spent on P4-P6 and P8 for the Chinese,while the Australian spent fairly more time on P4-P7 than other pages. Most of these pages contain detailed information about activities, room rate,food etc.In page analysis, we also found in page3 which contained both textual and pictures regions, all the subjects tended to made significantly more fixates on the text than other regions as shown in table 4. When looking at advertisements containing both textual and pictorial information, viewers tend to spend more time looking at text than the picture part of the ad,although they always claim they did not like ads with a lot of the text (Rayner, Rotello, Stewart, Keir & Duffy, 2001).

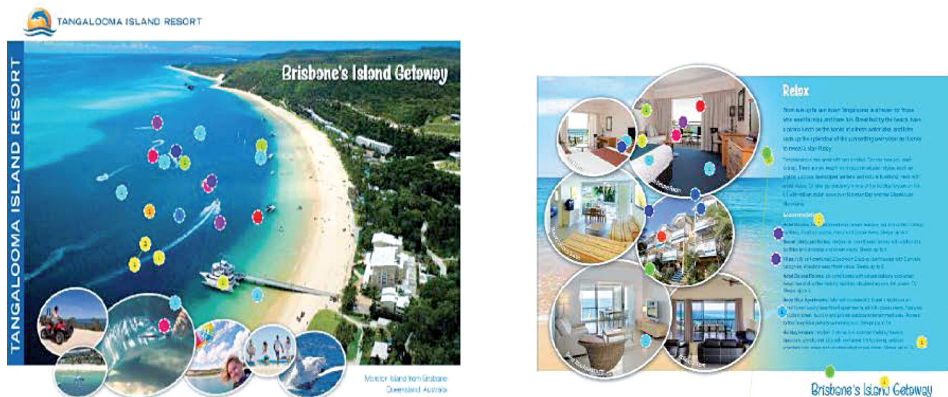
Table 4: Fixation count (n) on page 3

	fixation count(n)		
	text box	picture	slogan
Chinese	26.89**	6.82	Not included
Australian	50.18**	5.24	2.1
Notes:*p<0.05;**p<0.01			

3.2 Analysis on scanpath and heatmap

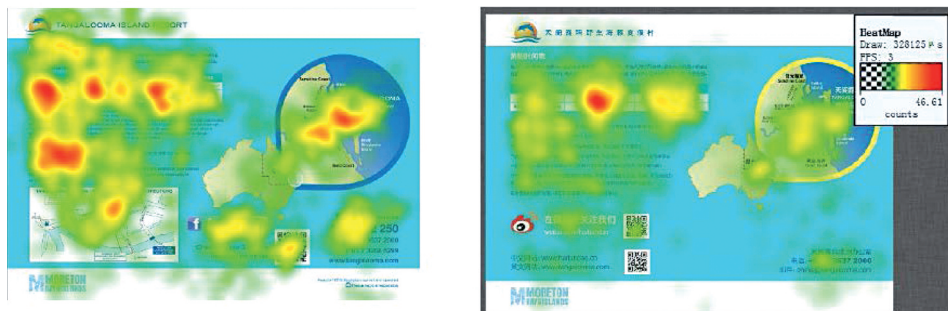
Although the scanpath and heatmap were difficult to quantify, there were some typical characteristics of how the subjects viewing brochure. From the scanpath research, both for the Chinese and Australians, almost all the first fixations were occurred in the center and driven by the large print pictures and headline (see Graph 4). The heat maps show the levels of concentration, the red zone indicates high level of fixation, which can corresponds to the most frequently and intensively observed areas, following by the yellow ones, the green zone indicates the lowest level of concentration. Non-coloured areas have not been perceived by the participants. According to the heat map, When the text was quite short (1-3 lines), participants typically read all of the text. When it was quite long, none read it all, especially for the Chinese readers (see Graph 5). Viewers did not read all of the text because they felt they had sufficient information from the ad (Rayner, Rotello, Stewart, Keir & Duffy, 2001).

Graph 4: Examples of initial scan paths from gaze plot analysis



Source Output from Tobii Pro Studio

Graph 5: Examples of the heat map analysis



Source Output from Tobii Pro Studio

3.3 Analysis on AOI's data and self-report data

As in most of the ads, it was easy to dividing those ads into different regions of text and picture components. We desgined some AOIs which showed siganificant difference on the measeures to examine our research question and further our study on a cross-culture perspective. Additionally,self-report data were analysed to gain a better understanding of the outcomes.

3.3.1 Individualism (IDV)

In a sense, some of the hypotheses on Individualism (IDV) were proved.The average amount of all the measures on Graph 3(b) is shown in Table 5. In summary, strong evidance for attention wear-out was found between these two picures. The results showed significant effects of two pictures on fixation count ($F=6.662, p<0.05, MSE=177.899$). All the participants spent relatively more total fixation duration ($F=19.721, p<0.01, MSE=27.270$), fixation count ($F=24.320, p<0.01, MSE=649.474$), saccade duration ($F=17.143, p<0.01, MSE=4.028$), saccade count ($F=6.153, p<0.05, MSE=7.053$) on the picture which implied a harmonious family. Since fixation and saccade duration are the length of time the participant looks at on an AOI or an AOI group which is positively related to attention and task difficulty. Fixation and saccade count has a positively relationship with visual attention (Ryohei, Isamu, Takao, Cass & Herzog, 2016). Therefore both the Chinese and Australian subjects had positive response to the family stimuli. Thus, hypotheses H1a is supported while H1b is unsupported.

Despite the Australian subjects didn't seem to pay more attention on the picture of a man enjoying sand tobogganing by himself, the self-report data presented almost 61.8% of the Australian group tended to like the picture of the single man,which indicate the meaning of independence and self-achievement(see Table 6). Here, hypotheses H1b can be supported partly.

Table 5: All measures for IDV study

Measures	Australian				Chinese			
	Single man		with family		Single man		with family	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
first fixation duration(s)	0.22	0.15	0.18	0.13	0.24	0.17	0.20	0.15
total fixation duration(s)	1.47	1.03	2.40**	1.59	1.11	0.66	2.12**	1.24
fixation count(n)	6.69	4.82	11.89**	8.03	4.52	2.63	9.00**	3.62
saccade duration(s)	0.64	0.28	0.95**	0.56	0.62	0.27	1.05**	0.69
saccade count(n)	2.27	1.19	2.68*	1.36	1.79	0.73	2.41*	0.93

Notes:* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$

3.3.2 Power distance (PDI)

Similar analyses were carried out on Graph 3(c). Generally, there were no main effects on all the measures(see Table 7), although the room on the right is more expensive than the left one according to the tariff . However,the heatmap showed significantly looking time on an extra bed in a cheap room for the Chinese participants(see Graph 5). The finding implies Chinese spent more cognitive attention on viewing the picture of sharing room with their family or friends on which hypothesis H1c is supported and this conclusion is also supported by the post-interviews.We can't predict more from the Self-report analysis.

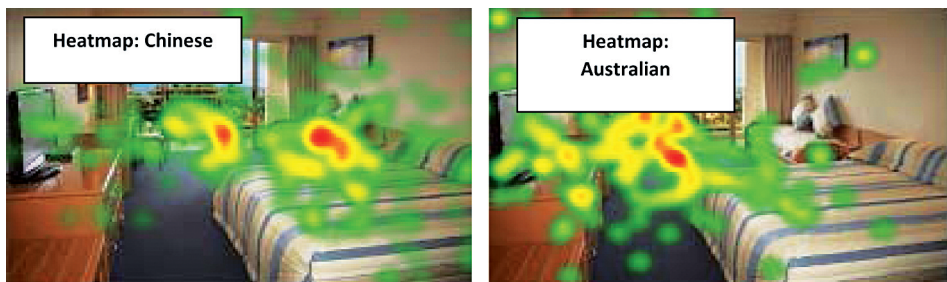
Table 6: Self-report data for IDV study

	Australian		Chinese	
	frequency	percent	frequency	percent
single man	21	61.76471	5	15.625
with family	13	38.23529	27	84.375

Table 7: All measures for PDI study

Measures	Australian				Chinese			
	Expensive room		Chenny room		Expensive room		Chenny room	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
first fixation duration(s)	0.23	0.12	0.18	0.13	0.23	0.16	0.21	0.14
total fixation duration(s)	3.31	2.55	3.55	2.67	4.41	3.46	3.37	2.52
fixation count(n)	12.53	9.73	13.47	9.74	16.29	14.15	13.29	9.25
saccade duration(s)	0.90	0.68	0.81	0.39	0.92	0.53	0.78	0.37
saccade count(n)	4.60	3.36	5.30	3.98	5.18	3.26	4.64	2.54

Graph 5: Heatmap for PDI study



Source Output from Tobii Pro Studio

3.3.3 Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)

In Graph 3(d) the picture on the left was about diving and seeking for a wild dolphin, meanwhile the other one on the right was about standing and waiting for a wild dolphin to come. The results (see Table 8) demonstrate that Chinese participants had a significantly contribute to the fixation count ($F=4.368, p<0.05, MSE=233.969$) on observing the picture which indicates safe and seems to be more outcome oriented. The finding implies that Chinese subjects demanded more cognitive effort and attention in viewing safe appeal. The analysis supported the hypothesis H3a. On the other hand, there was no main effect on all measures for the Australian subjects. The self-report data show the special preference for the left picture of the Australian subjects which indicates accepting cope with uncertainty and concerning more with the experience. Thus far, hypothesis H3b was supported partly by self-report data.

Table 8: All measures for UAI study

Measures	Australian				Chinese			
	seeking dolphin		observing dolphin		seeking dolphin		observing dolphin	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
first fixation duration(s)	0.25	0.20	0.21	0.16	0.24	0.15	0.22	0.15
total fixation duration(s)	2.44	2.28	2.92	2.01	1.89	1.62	2.77	2.02
fixation count(n)	9.81	8.10	12.75*	8.24	7.44	5.51	10.37*	7.06
saccade duration(s)	1.04	0.80	1.17	0.73	0.81	0.42	1.18	0.62
saccade count(n)	2.41	1.37	2.71	1.27	2.26	1.06	2.37	1.01

Notes: * $p<0.05$

4. Conclusion

In summary, the analyses reported in the previous section highlighted three key outcomes. (1) Viewers did not often read all of the text on a page and their eye movements always occurred from the center of advertisement and driven by the location of large print. When designing a tourist ad, we strongly suggest taking good advantage of headline and center part. As far as we can tell, when the participants looking at the advertisement containing both textual and pictorial information, they tended to spend more time looking at the text than the picture in ads. It is quite interesting that although viewers indicated that they didn't like ads with a lot of text, they did spent relatively more time on the text part. These findings indicate that the key textual information be more concise. (2) Tourists paid most attention to the first page and attention declined through the rest of the brochure. From this, we suspect tourists are interested in the price of products and service. The results of our

experiment suggest that information of price and activities seems to be stimulus to arouse the attention of tourists. (3) It is unwise to use one appeal across the board. The results of our study imply cultural background does affect reading habits. Specially, as many scholars found in previous studies, individualism-collectivism dimension was one of the most basic culture dimensions. In other word, a tourist advertiser can use cross-cultural theories to gain better understanding of their target market. Further research on the cross-cultural differences is recommended to improve international marketing.

In a practical sense, since people from diverse culture background may respond to stimuli in tourist ads differently, differentiation is needed when designing visual stimuli for tourism marketing. For instance, images portraying safe and collective, such as taking bird's-eye view of coastal line by helicopter, dolphin and whales watching by boat, parent-child and group activities, multi-room apartment and so on, will be benefit to received the attention from the Chinese market according to the products of Tanglooma island provide, while self-achievement and independent implication will capture the most attention of Australian market, for instance, exciting outdoor activities like deep diving and kite-surfing, etc.

5. Limitation and future research

The major limitation of this study is the sample scale and size. Although comparable to many eye-tracking studies, it is relatively small compared to cross culture studies, which aims to specify common values and behavior tendency. Our findings seem to generate more questions than answers. Future research should involved more subjects from various countries to expand both breadth and depth of the analysis on culture values.

Some interference was not taken into account. Moreover, the effects of other factors or multi-dimensions of mental workload on ocular metrics haven't been tested yet in this study. Future research can include additional methods, such as facial expression, emotion changes, post experiment interviews, in order to gain greater insights into the cognitive processes involved in these changes.

Overall, it is hoped that the results of this study could assist tourist advertisers to gain a better and clearer understanding of how visual stimuli and component affect among different countries. Our research should be viewed as a starting point, further research is worth pursuing.

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Attendance at the Christmas Market at the Old Town Square

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Abstract

Christmas markets are a big attraction for domestic and foreign tourists. The perception of the Advent atmosphere, as well as of markets as “authentic” events of the region (Brida, Disegna, & Osti, 2012a, 2013a), attract significant flows of visitors (Brida et al, 2013). The extension of the opening season for the majority of hotels testifies to the importance of this event for the local economy. Based on results of research in 2014, 5.6m people have visited markets in the Czech Republic (CRR Research, 2014). This article describes Christmas markets at The Old Town Square in 2016 and it provides basic details about attendance and visitors' shopping habits. A research was carried out from 5th December to 19th December 2016. It was a statistical study and short questions were given to tourists and sellers at stalls. The questions had a specifics structure and they were both closed and open. The research was conducted by personal questioning and the descriptive statistics was a chosen method for presenting obtained results.

Key words: Christmas Markets, Czech Republic, visitors of Christmas market, heritage of tradition

JEL classification: Z32

1. Introduction

Advent markets are a type of a culture event, and therefore, they are part of cultural tourism. A Christmas market is not only a shopping occasion but it also provides an experience for the whole family with the site especially decorated for Christmas, music, performances, and other features aiming to create a Christmas atmosphere (Brida et al, 2017). Each year, media provides information about Christmas markets that people can visit. Anyone can find many interesting tips about individual markets, ie what they offer or what tourists can try or taste there. For example, Dresden is famous for the longest „stola“ which is a type of a pastry, a speciality of Polish Wroclaw is drinkable honey, windows of

the town hall (Rathaus) in Wien represent a massive Advent Calendar during Christmas and Wien is also famous for the biggest Christmas decorations. We can also find a similar but bigger Advent Calendar in Meissen. And finally, Christmas markets in Prague are regarded as the most picturesque markets in Europe and according to CNN they are in the top ten markets in the world.

2. Old Town Christmas market

Each year, the Christmas Market is held at The Old Town Square which is one of the most popular places in Prague. It is the most famous square in Prague. It was created as a market place in the 12th century; however its roots go back to the 10th century. Different types of events have also taken place at The Old Town Square, see <http://www.prague.eu/cs/objekt/mista/183/staromestske-namesti>

Christmas markets at The Old Town Square belong to the most visited and largest markets in Prague. Year 2016 was very important as it brought lots of changes. Each year markets at The Old Town Square look like a fairy tale and in 2016 their organizers requested that only Czech made goods can be sold there. Decorations originated from the national folklore and all sellers were situated in small wooden chalet stalls. The markets took place from 26th November 2016 to 1st January 2017 and as always, the Christmas program was very rich for both adults and children (Prague.eu, 2016).

Christmas markets in Prague are not only on the The Old Town Square. Famous Christmas markets are also held at the Wenceslas Square, the Republic Square, Jiri from Podebrady's Square and at many other places.

Comprehensive information about Christmas markets and their program or other events during the Advent season is provided by the Tourist Information Centre in Prague. You can visit their web page on : <http://www.praguecitytourism.cz>.

3. Visitors of Christmas Markets

The Christmas markets are events that attract visitors who are looking for traditional atmosphere. They also have an important economic impact on local communities.

Understanding desires and needs of visitors in a place where a Christmas market has such a deep impact and it can be crucial for local organizers for creating an offer. For a long time, visitors to cultural attractions and events have been treated as a homogeneous mass of people (Brida, 2014). However, recent tourist literature tends to consider them as a heterogeneous market with different characteristics, perceptions, and needs (Hughes, 2002). For this reason, a greater

emphasis should be given to a segmentation of tourists. For example, Brida (2013a) has looked into this issue in his research that he conducted in an Italian town called Merano. The results of his research show that tourists at Christmas markets can be divided into three groups: business people, Christmas fans and general tourists (Brida et al 2013). These groups are based on a market segmentation in tourism with emphasis on s segmentation of visitors to cultural events (e.g. Lee a Lee, 2001, Prentice a Andersen, 2003, Lee, Lee a Wicks2004 etc).

If we look into the length of stay, it is clear that lots of people spend only one day at a Christmas market. These people are particularly domestic visitors but some of them are also foreign visitors. People who book multi days trips that include visits of Christmas markets and other cultural events or shopping days are called tourists and normally, they bring a large amount of money to the economy. The most tourists come to visit Christmas markets during weekends. At this time, markets are usually overcrowded. Less people attend markets during weekdays when domestic tourists and children on school trips are more likely to be there.

Table 1: Visitors of Christmas Markets at The Old Town Square.

Nationality
Asian People (Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean)
Russian
Italian
German
Dutch
American
Slovak
British

Source: the table is compiled by author

An order of nationalities that are shown in table 1 is not the same as their numbers at Christmas markets. Based on statistics about a number of tourists in the Czech Republic in 2016 we can conclude that the majority of tourists came from Germany (almost 1.9 mil tourists visited the Czech Republic in 2016 and Germans are on the first place in attendance of the Czech Republic by a great amount). Slovakia was with 643,000 visitors on the second place. On the other hand less people from the Russian Federation have visited Czech Republic. A number of Russian tourists drops each year and only 400,000 Russians visited Czech Republic in 2016 (Ministry for Regional Development, 2017). In this case, a decreasing trend was noticeable from August; however after this month there was a slight increase of Russian visitors in the Czech Republic. Therefore, it is possible that Christmas markets are one of the main attractions for Russian tourists.

If we compare the fourth quartiles, which is a period when Christmas

markets take place, of 2015 and 2016 we can see that there was an increase of tourists by 8.5% in 2016. This includes an increase by 8.3% of foreign tourists and by 8.7% of domestic ones (CZSO, 2017).

It is obvious that the Advent markets are popular and they have a good attendance. Every year new tourists visit and they are both foreign and domestic tourists. However, a question is - what type of tourists comes back? This question has been answered by Casteran and Roederer (2013). The results of their research indicated that visitors who perceive a Christmas market as authentic are more likely to repeat their visit to the same event. It is also clear that authenticity affects tourists' spending. These two things are coherent. Tourists spend more money if they find a Christmas market more authentic. (Casteran, Roederer, 2013, Brida et al 2013b).

4. Spending

Shopping represents one of the most important reasons why people like to visit Christmas markets profusely. How much a tourist spends during one day is important information. For this reason, 120 random tourists were asked the following questions. How much do you spend or did you spend at the Christmas market at The Old Town Square during one day? Answers were divided into three groups and frequency of answers is shown in table 2.

Table 2: How much spend foreign tourists in comparison with domestic visitors?

Nationality	Up to 300CZK/approx. 11 EUR	From 300CZK to 500CZK/approx. 18 EUR	From 500CZK to 1,000 CZK/approx 36 EUR
Czech	32	2	0
Asian people	5	28	10
Italian	5	2	0
Russian	8	0	15
German	4	9	2

Source: the table is compiled by author

An overview in table 2 is essential for organisers and sellers. Sellers adapt to shopping habits and solvency of different nationalities and they translate signs on their stalls into different languages, such as English, Russian and sometimes also Italian.

5. Shopping at Christmas Markets

Traditional Czech crafted products, Christmas decorations, warm socks and slippers and lots of other adorable treats are always offered at Christmas Markets. Lovers of sweets look for various stalls with traditional Christmas goodies, such as Czech brioche, decorated ginger bread and Linz pastry. From drinks, mead and mulled wine is popular. Puppets, Czech crystal, Czech garnet, wooden toys and Christmas decorations (particularly blown and handmade flasks and garlands) are traditionally the most searched products of the Advent market (Czechtourism, 2016).

What else could visitors see at the Christmas market at the Old Town Square? For example, live animals and workshops were big attractions for children. Tourists could also take a ride in a horse-drawn carriage. Charity work belongs to Christmas inherently and therefore many charity stalls were present at the Christmas Market.

Table 3: The number of stalls according to the offered assortment.

Type of a stall / goods	Number of stalls
Stalls selling food and drink (Christmas pastry called 'trdelník', pancakes, other sweet delicacies, potato chips, sausages, grilled pork meat, typical Christmas drinks, such as mead, mulled wine or punch)	56
Stalls with an artist who draws caricatures of tourists	1
Stalls selling textile goods (various knitted or woolly socks and hats, table cloths and crochet products)	17
Stalls selling decorations (hand made Christmas decorations, wooden puppets, jewellery and candles)	15
Charity stalls (Alzheimer Home Zátíší, Foundation for Children Prague, Civil Society Development Foundation, Help Children Foundation)	4
Total	93

Source: the table is compiled by author

The Old Town Square's area is 9,000m² big. We could find 93 Christmas stalls that mainly offered food and drinks, following by textile products at The Old Town Square in 2016.

Table 4 shows an overview of prices of the most popular products (food and drinks). The last place of honour belongs to puppets that are a Czech speciality. Czech puppetry has been put on the list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO. Czech puppets are very popular with foreign tourists and they are usually an important present or souvenir.

¹Similar products (ie food and drink) were included in the same group for a better orientation

Table 4: Prices of purchased products:

Product	Price in CZK
Mulled wine	50 CZK
Punch	60 CZK
Mead	80 CZK
Trdelník	From 70 CZK to 120 CZK
Chips	75 CZK
Wooden puppets	From 300 CZK

Source: the table is compiled by author

6. Conclusion

Christmas markets are a cultural event and they represent a certain form of visitors. Those markets at The Old Town Square in Prague have a long tradition and belong to one of the most beautiful markets in the world. People like to visit them, so that they can taste local specialities and buy souvenirs, Christmas decorations, traditional Czech products or any other goods. They have become an important part of the national economy.

Therefore, we can conclude that the main reason why people come to the Christmas markets is to relax, enjoy Christmas atmosphere, spend time with their family and friends (Brida et al 2012) and taste different local food and drink specialities. Christmas markets are also a good place for Christmas shopping.

Christmas markets represent an important part of cultural tourism and a niche in a scientific field.

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Press Releases

Madrid, Spain, 17 November 2015
PR No. 16094

UNWTO supports Sudan's Tourism Development

UNWTO Secretary General, Taleb Rifai, has expressed the commitment of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to support Sudan's tourism development during his recent official visit to Sudan. The visit coincided with a three-day regional executive training on crisis communication in tourism organized by UNWTO and the UNWTO.Themis Foundation (Khartoum, Sudan, 15-17 November, 2016).

Meeting with the President of the Republic of Sudan, H.E. Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, to present the 'Open Letter on Travel and Tourism', a campaign promoted jointly by UNWTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) to raise awareness of the value of tourism to development, Mr. Rifai reiterated the potential of the tourism sector in creating new opportunities for the people of Sudan.

The President expressed Sudan's appreciation for the support of UNWTO by presenting UNWTO Secretary-General with the Order of the Two Niles Grand Cross.

The official visit also included meetings with the press to address the issues of perception in Africa and a visit to Port Sudan and to the recently nominated World Heritage site of the Sanganeb Island. There Mr Rifai emphasized the need to build and have the right infrastructure in place and be able to communicate effective and positive messages to the world about Sudan.

Perception issues and the generalization of the impact of crises in specific locations to the whole region are some of the main obstacles facing tourism development in Africa. To address this, UNWTO and the UNWTO.Themis Foundation have organized a three days training on crisis communication in Sudan. Crisis communication preparedness is key to build resilience in Africa as it allows destinations to minimize the impact of crisis situations on the tourism sector and thus on its socio-economic benefits.

The course, part of UNWTO/UNWTO.Themis Foundation ongoing training on crisis communication, brought together nearly 60 communications professionals from eleven African countries. During three days, participants increased their capacities on crisis communications preparedness and management and exchanged experiences in managing crises

Madrid, Spain, 21 November 2016
PR No. 16095

Ilunion Hotels receives UNWTO Ethics Award

The World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) has awarded Ilunion Hotels with the UNWTO Ethics Award. The Award distinguishes Ilunion Hotels for its work in the area of accessible tourism for all and its contribution to change attitudes, break down social barriers and make the accommodation industry more inclusive.

This new category of the UNWTO Awards, the flagship awards of the World Tourism Organization, aims to recognize tourism companies and associations for their commitment and work in the promotion and implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics of Tourism.

Ilunion Hotels' pioneer policies and outstanding commitment in the area of universal accessibility is applied throughout its business model, comprising not only customers with disabilities and other access needs, but also its employees and suppliers. For these reasons, the Jury considered that Ilunion Hotels represents a virtuous, innovative and replicable best practice of corporate social responsibility.

The Jury of the UNWTO Ethics Award is composed of the Chair and members of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, an independent and impartial body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

The 13th UNWTO Awards Ceremony will take place on 18 January 2017 in Madrid, in collaboration with the International Tourism Trade Fair (IFEMA/FITUR).

Madrid, Spain, 23 Novemebr 2016
PR No. 16096

UNWTO congress to discuss the links between cultural heritage and creative tourism

The World Tourism Organization and the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria will jointly host the International Congress on World Civilizations and Creative Tourism on 29 November - 1 December 2016 in Sofia, Bulgaria. The Congress will discuss how creative tourism can play a significant role in safeguarding and promoting tangible and intangible heritage as well as in generating socio-economic benefits.

In 2015, almost 1.2 billion international tourists travelled the world and UNWTO forecasts continued growth in the years to come. UNWTO estimates that cultural tourism accounts for around 40% of all international tourist arrivals as per the report 'Tourism and Culture Synergies'.

The conference will address how world civilizations can be brought back to life through the collaboration with creative industries – such as architecture, design, arts, technology and science – while contributing to sustainable tourism development.

A highlevel debate moderated by CNN's Max Foster will gather 20 ministers of tourism from around the world to discuss how effective partnership models can be developed to contribute to safeguarding and promoting world civilizations, while creating socio-economic benefits for local communities.

In 2015, Bulgaria received 7 million international tourists generating US\$ 3.1 billion in exports. It is expected that this year the country, whose population is around 7 million, will welcome more than 8 million international tourists – up from 6 million in 2010. These results reflect the commitment of Bulgaria to tourism development, including the creation in 2014 and for the first time of a dedicated Ministry of Tourism.

Madrid, Spain, 28 November 2016
PR No. 16097

WTTC and UNWTO urge UK government to lift air ban to Sharm el Sheikh

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) call on the UK government to lift the current ban on UK-based airlines flying to Sharm el Sheikh.

In a letter to Prime Minister Theresa May, David Scowsill, President & CEO, WTTC, and Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General, UNWTO, stressed the importance of resuming operations to the Egyptian coastal resort as the current travel advisory is having devastating effects on the country's economy and social stability. The ban has been in place since a Metrojet airline flying from Sharm el Sheikh to St Petersburg crashed in the Sinai Desert in October 2015.

They said: "Travel & Tourism is vital to Egypt's economy and social peace, contributing 11% of the country's GDP and 2.6 million in jobs in 2015. The reduction of visitors has created huge employment losses. The country's biggest concern is how the lack of employment opportunities, especially for young men and women, has instilled a desperate disposition and thus vulnerability to radicalisation or to fleeing on a refugee boat."

Egyptian authorities have taken significant measures to step up the level of security not only in the airport but in the surrounding area as well. These improvements now meet the safety standards as indicated by the UK Department for Transport. All other countries, including Germany and Russia, have allowed their airlines to start flying to Sharm el Sheikh again.

They concluded: "It is devastating to see the impact the current UK

travel advisory has on Egypt and on the young workforce in particular. We call on the UK government to review the advisory and allow commercial aircraft to fly to Sharm el Sheikh and thereby help restore the country's Travel & Tourism sector's GDP and employment provision."

Madrid, Spain, 5 December 2016
PR No.16099

International Year for Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 garners support from the sector

Only few weeks ahead of the official launch of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017, set to take place on the 18 of January 2017 in Madrid, Spain, representatives from various tourism industries and beyond have joined UNWTO to support the celebrations of this important event.

The United Nations 70th General Assembly has designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. In the context of the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the International Year aims to support a change in policies, business practices and consumer behavior towards a more sustainable tourism sector that contributes to the SDGs.

The Ministry of Tourism of Mexico, the German National Tourism Board, All Nippon Airways, the Global Tourism Economy Research Centre, Macao, China, the Balearic Islands Tourism Agency, Minube, Amadeus, the European Geoparks Network, The Travel Corporation and DDB are among the first sponsors to join UNWTO to support the programme of activities of the Year. The City of Zurich, the University of Crete, CABI and Green Key have also joined as "Friends" of the Year.

"The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, to be launched in January in Madrid, is a unique opportunity to raise awareness on the contribution of sustainable tourism to development among public and private sector decision-makers and the general public, while mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change," said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

The year will promote tourism's role in the following five key areas:

- (1) Inclusive and sustainable economic growth
- (2) Social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction
- (3) Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change
- (4) Cultural values, diversity and heritage
- (5) Mutual understanding, peace and security.

A full programme of activities will be unveiled on 18 January on the occasion of the Opening of the International Year.

Madrid, Spain, 12 December 2016
PR No. 16101

The University of South Florida's Patel College of Global Sustainability – the newest member of the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO)

The Blue Community Observatory hosted by the USF Patel College of Global Sustainability (PCGs) of the University of South Florida, USA, has become the latest member of the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories. This Observatory monitors the impact of tourism in parts of the Pinella and Manatee Counties, two popular tourist destinations in Florida.

The observatory is the first sustainable tourism observatory in the United States and will be working with a total of 16 communities within the two counties, aiming at providing policy makers and tourism managers with the regular gathering, analysis and communication of information related to tourism's impacts on environmental, social and economic aspects.

The monitoring area is one of the most popular tourist destination in Florida due to its unique coastal environment and marine habitat. It welcomes over 13 million visitors every year who contribute enormously to the local economy where tourism generates directly 116,300 jobs (Pinellas and Manatee). Continuous monitoring of the tourism impact and performance, across the three dimensions of sustainable development, is therefore a crucial element for sustainable tourism development and evidence-based decisions.

The work of the Blue Community Observatory is focused on areas such as local satisfaction with tourism in the destination; seasonality patterns; energy, waste and water control; food production, clean marinas, education, and policies related to the science of planetary boundaries, among others.

"We highly welcome the Blue Community Observatory at the University of South Florida as a new member of the Network as it will help us to achieve the mission of this initiative in a unique momentum in which we prepare for the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017" said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

"During 2017, the work of the Observatories will be prominently featured globally as crucial elements to monitor tourism development and ensure the sustainability of our sector", he added.

Madrid, Spain, 14 January 2015
PR No. 16107

UNWTO and the European Travel Commission address Crisis Communications in the tourism sector

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the European Travel Commission (ETC) have co-organized a working session with European countries to discuss crisis communications in tourism. The event was held at UNWTO headquarters in Madrid.

One of the goals of the meeting was to advance crisis communications coordination and preparedness for all destinations. The meeting discussed crises of different types, ranking from natural disasters to political instability and health-related pandemics.

Attended by representatives from 13 countries, the session addressed how crises have a transversal impact, and how the perception and image of destinations are affected by them. Issues of strategic crisis communications, media relations and the use of big data were in focus.

“No nation on Earth is free from suffering a crisis and we should assume that crisis management has a highly relevant communications angle that can help diminishing the impact as well as to fasten the recovery process. Having a quick, transparent and credible support when the crisis occurs is part of that process,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai during his intervention.

“It is only by planning ahead, building relationships with media and learning how to properly communicate that destinations can be prepared to respond effectively to crisis situations and safeguard travel. It is true that there are challenges, and the tourism community has to work together to tackle them”, said Eduardo Santander, CEO of the European Travel Commission.

UNWTO initiatives in the field of Crisis Communications, such as the Executive Training on this theme and the Toolbox on Crisis Communications, were presented during the session.

Madrid, Spain, 19 December 2016
PR No. 16108

UNWTO strengthens its relationship with the European Union

During a recent visit to Brussels, Belgium, the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Taleb Rifai, has discussed how to reinforce the collaboration of the Organization with the European Union (EU).

Rifai met the EU Commissioners for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, Tibor Navracsics; for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries,

Karmenu Vella; and for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica. Issues such as the links between culture and tourism, the EU Blue Growth Agenda, namely in the areas of oceans and biodiversity, the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and the Sustainable Tourism Goals (SDGs) were in the agenda.

During the visit, Rifai also met the Deputy-Prime Minister of Belgium, Kris Peeters, and, Ben Weyets the Flemish Minister of Mobility and Public Works, the Vlaamse Randa, Tourism and Animal Welfare. Under the auspices of Minister Weyets, UNWTO signed an agreement with the Flanders Department of Foreign Affairs to jointly develop a set of guidelines for tourism on war-related historical sites.

UNWTO welcomes EU-China Year of Tourism

Rifai has also welcomed the EU-China Year of Tourism during his recent participation at the 1st anniversary of the Europe China OBOR Culture & Tourism Development Committee of the Europe-China One Belt One Road initiative.

The event held in Brussels, Belgium, stressed the relevance of tourism and culture in strengthening the links between the European Union and China.

“The Committee works to ensure that the tourism sector within the European Union responds with a unified voice to the immense potential of the Chinese tourism market and the One Belt One Road initiative, one of the largest ever investment plans. The support of UNWTO to the Committee and to the EU-China Year of Tourism in 2018 is of critical value” said István Ujhelyi, President of the Committee.

On the occasion of his visit to Brussels, Rifai also signed an agreement with the Network of European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism (NECsTour) to work on several issues including the promotion of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

“Bearing in mind UNWTO and NECSTouR common priorities and considering the fruitful cooperation between our organizations, including NECSTouR intention to join UNWTO as an Affiliate Member, this agreement is a natural step. We trust it will generate many valuable opportunities” said the President of NECSTouR, Octavi Bono.

Madrid, Spain, 17 January 2017
PR No. 17003

Sustained growth in international tourism despite challenges

Demand for international tourism remained robust in 2016 despite challenges. International tourist arrivals grew by 3.9% to reach a total of 1,235 million, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. Some 46 million more tourists (overnight visitors) travelled internationally last year compared to 2015.

2016 was the seventh consecutive year of sustained growth following the 2009 global economic and financial crisis. A comparable sequence of uninterrupted solid growth has not been recorded since the 1960s. As a result, 300 million more international tourists travelled the world in 2016 as compared to the pre-crisis record in 2008. International tourism receipts grew at a similar pace in this period (complete 2016 receipts results will be reported in May).

“Tourism has shown extraordinary strength and resilience in recent years, despite many challenges, particularly those related to safety and security. Yet, international travel continues to grow strongly and contribute to job creation and the wellbeing of communities around the world”, said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

By region, Asia and the Pacific (+8%) led growth in international tourist arrivals in 2016, fuelled by strong demand from both intra- and interregional source markets. Africa (+8%) enjoyed a strong rebound after two weaker years. In the Americas (+4%) the positive momentum continued. Europe (+2%) showed rather mixed results, with double-digit growth in some destinations offset by decreases in others. Demand in the Middle East (-4%) was also uneven, with positive results in some destinations, but declines in others.

Recalling that 2017 has been designated by the United Nations the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, Mr. Rifai said “we need to work closer together to harness the contribution of tourism to economic growth, social inclusion, cultural and environmental preservation and mutual understanding, particularly when we live in times with such a deficit of respect and tolerance”.

Experts remain optimistic about 2017

The latest survey of UNWTO’s Panel of Experts shows continued confidence in 2017, with the large majority (63%) of the some 300 respondents expecting ‘better’ or ‘much better’ results than in 2016. The Panel score for 2017 virtually equals that of 2016, so growth is expected to be maintained at a similar level.

Based on current trends, the outlook of the UNWTO Panel of Experts and economic prospects, UNWTO projects international tourist arrivals worldwide to grow at a rate of 3% to 4% in 2017. Europe is expected to grow at 2% to 3%, Asia and the Pacific and Africa both at 5% to 6%, the Americas at 4% to 5% and the Middle East at 2% to 5%, given the higher volatility in the region.

2016 Regional Results

Results in Europe were rather mixed with a number of destinations affected by safety and security challenges. International arrivals reached 620 million in 2016, or 12 million (+2%) more than in 2015. Northern Europe (+6%) and Central Europe (+4%) both recorded sound results, while in Southern Mediterranean Europe arrivals grew by 1% and in Western Europe results were flat.

Asia and the Pacific (+8%) led growth across regions in both relative

and absolute terms, recording 24 million more international tourist arrivals in 2016 to total 303 million. Growth was strong in all four subregions, with Oceania receiving 10% more arrivals, South Asia 9% more and North-East Asia and South-East Asia both 8% more.

International tourist arrivals in the Americas(+4%) increased by 8 million to reach 201 million, consolidating the solid results recorded in the last two years. Growth was somewhat stronger in South America and Central America (both +6%), while the Caribbean and North America recorded around 4% more arrivals.

Available data for Africa points to an 8% rebound in international arrivals in 2016 after two troubled years, adding 4 million arrivals to reach 58 million. Sub-Saharan Africa (+11%) led growth, while a gradual recovery started in North Africa (+3%).

The Middle East received 54 million international tourist arrivals in 2016. Arrivals decreased an estimated 4% with mixed results among the region's destinations. Results for both Africa and the Middle East should be read with caution as they are based on limited available data.

Note: All results in this release are based on preliminary data, as reported by the various destinations around the world, and UNWTO estimates of still-missing data. UNWTO will continue to collect data and will present more comprehensive data by country in the April issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer.

Madrid, Spain, 17 January 2017
PR No. 17004

UNWTO and Japan International Cooperation Agency partner to promote sustainable tourism

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation aimed at providing a framework for joint action in the area of sustainable tourism.

The agreement, undersigned by UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, and JICA Executive Senior Vice President, Kazuhiko Koshikawa, opens important opportunities of collaboration as JICA is one of the largest global donors in terms of international cooperation for development in tourism.

As underlined in the document, the agreement aims to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through tourism. A particular focus is given to assisting developing countries to reduce poverty through tourism as well as to improve public policies and business practices in order to ensure sustainable and responsible production and consumption patterns along the tourism supply chain.

“To work together with a development agency that has 40 years of experience is a privilege and a unique opportunity for UNWTO, particularly now that we are launching the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017,” said UNWTO Secretary General Taleb Rifai on the occasion of the signature of the agreement conducted at the Organizations’ Headquarters in Madrid.

Other areas of cooperation include research and knowledge-sharing in themes such as tourism and poverty reduction, tourism development in developing countries, tourism and climate change and tourism and security.

In addition, both Organizations will cooperate in technical assistance projects addressing policy and strategy development, institutional strengthening, quality standards, human resource development as well as capacity building.

Madrid, Spain, 20 January 2017
PR No. 17005

The World Tourism Organization begins the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain presided over the event celebrating the launch of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The gathering was attended by ministers of tourism from around the world. The celebration highlighted tourism’s enormous potential to contribute to the development of all countries within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the need to continue advancing towards a more sustainable sector that generates benefits to local communities and promotes the conservation of cultural values and natural heritage.

The event, held in the El Pardo Palace in Madrid, Spain, was attended by the Prime Minister of Georgia, the Vice-President of Honduras, more than 40 tourism ministers and other senior officials from 57 countries.

The UNWTO Secretary-General underscored the continued growth of tourism since the beginning of the crisis – “in 2016, more than 1.2 billion people travelled around the world for tourism purposes and another 6 billion people travelled domestically” – and emphasized the need to move towards more sustainable tourism in all its dimensions.

“In parallel with the growth of the sector, there is also increased responsibility to advance towards greater sustainability, equity, inclusiveness and peace in our societies,” he said.

For his part, His Majesty the King mentioned that “there are many reasons for declaring 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, such as greater appreciation of different cultures and thus peace among peoples”.

“To have been chosen as the host country for the launch of the International Year is an acknowledgement of Spain’s commitment in areas such as ecotourism, cultural tourism and agrotourism initiatives,” he said.

The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 was declared in December 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly. The Year was also presented in Madrid on the opening day of FITUR, marking an important milestone in the 2030 Agenda and in the progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Madrid, Spain, 19 January 2017
PR No. 17006

UNWTO Awards recognize the commitment of the tourism sector to sustainable approaches

Guanajuato’s State Ministry of Tourism (Mexico), Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group (Belgium), Govardhan Ecovillage (India) and Dutch Travel Trade Association (Netherlands) were the winners of 13th Edition of the UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism. Nearly 150 initiatives from 55 countries applied for this edition.

The UNWTO Awards paid tribute to the commitment of the tourism sector towards sustainability and innovation. The winning projects were announced last night during the UNWTO Awards Ceremony in the International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR) in Madrid.

“The 13th UNWTO Awards is particularly relevant as it coincides with the Official Launch of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017, a milestone and an immense opportunity for the global tourism community to advance towards a more inclusive and sustainable sector,” underlined UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai in his opening remarks.

Attended by nearly 400 participants from 85 countries, the Ceremony emphasized how the tourism community has embraced sustainable and innovative approaches in the last years as ways to enhance the sector in the future.

The UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism are held annually to highlight and promote the work of organizations and individuals around the world that have greatly impacted the tourism sector.

Their achievements have served as an inspiration for competitive and sustainable tourism development and the promotion of the values of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The awardees of the 13th UNWTO Awards for Innovation in four different categories are as follows:

Finalists	Organization	Project	Country	Post
Public Policies and Governance	Guanajuato Ministry of Tourism	Strategies for the Development of Sustainable Tourism in Guanajuato	Mexico	Winner
	Instituto Costarricense de Turismo	Social Progress Index in Tourist Destinations of Costa Rica	Costa Rica	First runner up
	Valencia Region Tourism Board	Valencian Institute of Tourism Technologies (INVAT.TUR)	Spain	Second runner up
	Advisory Council of the Tourism Ministry	Innovative Use of E-Tourism	Egypt	Third runner up
Enterprises	Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group	Adding Color to Lives	Belgium	Winner
	Ecobnb	Ecobnb, The Community of Sustainable Tourism	Italy	First runner up
	Govardhan Ecovillage	Govardhan Ecovillage - Eco Tourism as a catalyst for rural development	India	Winner
Non-Governmental Organizations	Petra National Trust	Culture Heritage: Tools for Sustainability of a World Heritage Site	Jordan	First runner up
	Fundación Tropicalia	A Sustainable Tourism Supply Chain	Dominican Republic	Second runner up
	ANVR (Dutch Travel Trade Association)	Carmacal carbon calculator for travel packages	Netherlands	Winner
	Turismo de Portugal, IP	Tourism 4.0	Portugal	First runner up
Research and Technology	Ulysses Foundation	Encyclopedia of Tourism	Spain	Second runner up

Madrid, Spain, 19 January 2017
PR No. 17007

International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 kicks off

Nearly 600 participants attended yesterday the Official Launch of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017. The event took place in the International Tourism Fair of Spain, FITUR, and will be followed by 12 months of global actions aimed at advancing sustainable tourism contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Co-presented by Max Forster, CNN, and Raquel Martínez, RTVE, the event underlined the immense socio-economic opportunities brought by the sector to all societies as well as its power to advocate for mutual understanding, peace and sustainable development worldwide.

“Every day, more than three million tourists cross international borders. Every year, almost 1.2 billion people travel abroad. Tourism has become a pillar of economies, a passport to prosperity, and a transformative force for improving millions of lives. The world can and must harness the power of tourism as we strive to carry out the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development“ said United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, in his message on the occasion of the International Year.

“2017 is a unique opportunity for us to promote the contribution of tourism to achieving the future we want – and also to determine, together, the exact role we will have tourism play in the sustainable development agenda, to and beyond 2030. A unique opportunity to ensure that tourism is a pillar in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, said UNWTO Secretary General, Taleb Rifai, opening of the event.

“With the launch of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development we once again emphasize that our nations all face common global challenges, which can only be resolved through advancing relations and furthering partnerships. By introducing this initiative, we have highlighted that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the focal point for future development, and will guide us to create long-term assets, and prevent relevant liabilities.”, said the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili.

“The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 is an incentive to a foster social and political dialogue which can promote initiatives, investments and government actions leading to development and the fight against poverty” said the Vice-President of Honduras, Ricardo Alvarez Arias.

“The 2030 Agenda considers sustainable tourism as a vector of development, job creation and the promotion of local culture and products. Tourism is part of the Sustainable Development Goals and

contributes decisively to almost all 17 Goals through its impacts on fighting poverty, promoting decent jobs, improving gender equality and the livelihoods of young people or the fight against climate change” said the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, Alfonso María Dastis.

Addressing the Ceremony were also Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, Francesco Bandarin, Assistant Director-General for Culture at UNESCO and Elzbieta Bienkowska, European Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs.

On the occasion, UNWTO announced the nomination of the Ambassadors of the International Year: HE Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia; HM King Simeon II; Huayong Ge, President, UnionPay; Dr Talal Abu Ghazaleh, Chairman, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization and Dr Michael Frenzel, President, Federal Association of the German Tourism Industry

The event also marked the launch of the International Year campaign ‘Travel.Enjoy.Respect’, aimed at promoting sustainable tourism among travelers in partnership with CNN and RTVE.

Sponsors of the International Year:

Official Sponsors: ANA, Balearic Islands; Global Tourism Economy Research Centre; Minube; Amadeus; Chimelong; Ras Al Khaimah; Ministry of Tourism of Colombia; Ministry of Tourism of Morocco, IFEMA/FITUR

Diamond: Ministry of Tourism of Mexico, Georgian National Tourism Board, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan, The Travel Corporation, Capital Airlines, Eventísimo, Mastercard

Gold: German National Tourism Board (DZT), Turismo de Portugal, Valencian Tourist Agency, Catalunya Tourist Board, Global Geoparks Network, University of Applied Sciences HTW Chur – Institute of Tourism and Leisure, Intercontinental Hotels Group

Silver: JTB Corp, South Pole Group

Media Partners: CNN, RTVE, Travel Weekly

Madrid, Spain, 30 January 2017

PR No. 17009

UNWTO welcomes 5-day visa-free policy by Belarus to citizens of 80 states

UNWTO has expressed its full support to the decision of the Government of Belarus to launch the 5-day visa-free policy that will be applicable to travelers from 80 countries. The measure aims at advancing seamless travel and attracting visitors, particularly those on business trips.

The Government of Belarus has recently decided to advance visa facilitation as a means to stimulate tourism development. The decision introduces visa-free entry at the Minsk National Airport and visa-free stay in Belarus for up to five days for the citizens of 80 states. Among those, there are 39 countries of Europe, including the entire European Union, Brazil, Indonesia, the USA and Japan.

“Visa facilitation is among the most effective strategies to induce tourism development in a region or in a country, so we are sure that the tourism sector will experience a positive shift in Belarus,” said UNWTO Secretary General, Taleb Rifai.

The promotion of seamless travel is one of UNWTO’s priorities, considering the proven capacity of visa facilitation to stimulate economic growth and job creation through tourism.

Belarus started policies to simplify the visa process in April 2016.

Madrid, Spain, 30 January 2017
PR No. 17010

UNWTO Lifetime Achievement Award pays tribute to the founders of Lonely Planet

Tony Wheeler and Maureen Wheeler, founders of the widely-known Lonely Planet Publications have received the 13th UNWTO Lifetime Achievement Award. The prize is conferred every year to individuals with visionary leadership and significant contributions to the global tourism sector.

The inspirational role that Lonely Planet inferred worldwide to travelers, writers and the tourism sector in general has been the major reason to concede the UNWTO Lifetime Achievement Award to the Wheelers.

The couple founded Lonely Planet Publications in 1972, after a trip across Asia. In the last 40 years, their guidebooks have sold over 100 million copies in English and other languages. Lonely Planet also ventured into many other travel areas including a television series and an award-winning travel website.

The work of Tony and Maureen Wheeler goes beyond the Lonely Planet Publications and has reached a wider scope through the Planet Wheeler Foundation. It is currently involved in more than 50 projects in the developing world, principally in Southeast Asia and East Africa, with a focus on poverty alleviation.

In addition, the London Business School hosts the Tony & Maureen Wheeler Chair of Entrepreneurship whose work concentrates on entrepreneurship in the developing world. In Melbourne, Australia the creation of the Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing & Ideas played a key role in the city’s recognition as a UNESCO City of Literature. Maureen is the Chairperson of the annual Melbourne Arts Festival and the Principal

Patron of Opera Australia's production of Wagner's Ring Cycle in Melbourne in 2013 and 2016. Tony is a director of Global Heritage Fund, which works to protect and develop archaeological sites in the developing world.

Tony and Maureen Wheeler did only not see traveling as an opportunity to visit new places, but as an opportunity to share an untold story with the world and support their values.

Madrid, Spain, 31 January 2017
PR No. 17011

UNWTO Statement on US Travel Ban

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the United Nations Specialized Agency for Tourism, expresses its deep concern and strong condemnation over the recently announced travel ban by the United States of America (USA) to nationals of seven countries (Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen).

The travel ban, based on nationality, is contrary to the principles of freedom of travel and travel facilitation promoted by the international tourism community and will hinder the immense benefits of the tourism sector brings in terms of economic growth and job creation to many countries, including the USA.

"Global challenges demand global solutions and the security challenges that we face today should not prompt us to build new walls; on the contrary, isolationism and blind discriminatory actions will not lead to increased security but rather to growing tensions and threats", said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

"Besides the direct impact, the image of a country which imposes travel bans in such a hostile way will surely be affected among visitors from all over the world and risk dumping travel demand to the USA" added Mr Rifai.

Madrid, Spain, 09 February 2017
PR No. 17013

Viajes El Corte Inglés commits to Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

Viajes El Corte Inglés has signed the Private Sector Commitment to the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, a key element of tourism enterprises' efforts in the field of corporate social responsibility.

With more than 1.2 billion international travellers in 2016, tourism has become one of the most powerful catalysts for the development of

countries. Its capacity to create employment — 1 out of every 11 jobs worldwide is generated by the sector — to promote environmental protection and to create synergies between nations makes it a vital tool of the 2030 Development Agenda.

In this context, the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism constitutes an important roadmap to guide the increasing responsibility of all actors involved in the preservation of the environment, culture and local communities.

“The addition of Viajes El Corte Inglés to the roster of companies committed to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is one of the most significant milestones of 2017, particularly when we are celebrating the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

Viajes El Corte Inglés is also one of the companies participating in the project carried out by UNWTO and the Global Compact on tourism and the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDGs).

The Code includes principles such as respect for human rights and cultural heritage, the protection of the environment and the most vulnerable communities, as well as concepts such as inclusiveness, gender equality and accessibility. “This is a universal document that contains moral values that all societies of the twenty-first century have accepted as fundamental,” said the Secretary-General.

For his part Juan Luis Vassallo Saavedra, Director of Legal Affairs and Secretary of the Board of Directors of Viajes El Corte Inglés, explained: “Sustainability means much more than reforestation or practising philanthropy. It is a reaffirmation of our strong link with the society we form a part of and, above all, a way of creating lasting value.”

The Code of Ethics, which is currently undergoing a process of conversion into an international convention, was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001 with the intention of inviting Member States to apply ethical principles relating to tourism. To date, 493 companies and associations from 67 countries have signed the Commitment.

Madrid, Spain, 13 February 2017
PR No. 17015

Murcia to host the 1st UNWTO World Conference on Smart Destinations

To advance and shape a tourism model for the 21st century based on innovation, technology, sustainability and accessibility – these are the aims of the World Conference on Smart Destinations to be held in Murcia on 15-17 February, organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Ministry of Energy, Tourism and Digital Agenda of Spain, and the Region of Murcia.

A few weeks following the launch of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the city of Murcia has picked up the baton to offer a platform for the discussion of key issues in the global agenda of the sector, such as innovation, technology, sustainability and accessibility.

The 1st UNWTO World Conference on Smart Destinations will bring together government representatives, private sector entities, researchers and academics, as well as technology centres. Among the topics to be addressed is that of digital applications that make it possible to offer increasingly customized services and to differentiate tourist destinations that provide added value while preserving the natural, social and cultural environment.

“These themes, which are priorities of the work of the World Tourism Organization, define 21st century tourism: committed to ecosystems, local cultures and to economic and social development,” explained UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai. “It will be impossible to capitalize on the potential of tourism in aspects such as job creation and socioeconomic development if we do not commit to and move towards sustainable practices that are respectful of the environment and local communities,” he underlined.

The Conference includes an academic block in which research related to 21st century tourism will be presented. A session will also feature entrepreneurs who have developed highly innovative products or services in the area of smart destinations.

The event will conclude with the reading of a manifesto summarizing the contributions of the participants, which will form the basis of the first UNWTO report on smart destinations.

The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, declared by the United Nations General Assembly and led by UNWTO, constitutes a common tool for global action towards a more responsible, inclusive and prosperous sector. To this end, the organizations in charge of the Conference encourage governments, private sector entities, consumers and civil society organizations to join the campaign and share their experiences.

Madrid, Spain, 08 February 2017
PR No. 17016

Working Group progresses on the Convention on the Protection of Tourists

The continuous growth of the tourism sector and its current trends and challenges, including those related to safety and security and the expansion of new businesses models, require an adaptation of the global legal framework. In this regard, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

has been working since 2011 on the development of an international convention to protect tourists and ensure confidence in the tourism sector, an initiative now in its final phase.

The 9th meeting of the Working Group on the International Convention on the 'Protection of Tourists and the rights and obligations of Tourism Service Providers' took place on 26-27 January 2017. The meeting was focused on advancing the Draft Convention by incorporating the comments of UNWTO Member States and the members of the Working Group in the framework of the Public Consultation made between August and November 2016.

The protection of tourists in emergency situations, enhancing cooperation among States and information sharing are issues of the utmost importance for the Organization, together with the overall protection of tourists as consumers. These are major areas in the Convention and will ultimately improve confidence in tourism service providers. As UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai has previously expressed, "we are at a highly relevant crossroads; tourism is increasing every year and governments and private sector need tools to build a framework to guarantee tourist protection among other trends".

The final Working Group meeting will take place on 28-29 March 2017 at the UNWTO Headquarters in Madrid and will aim to finalize text of the Draft Convention, for its submission to the XXII UNWTO General Assembly (Chengdu, China, September 2017).

The Working Group on the International Convention on the 'Protection of Tourists and the rights and obligations of Tourism Service Providers' was created by the Decision of the UNWTO Executive Council in 2011. The Working Group, chaired by Mr. Zoltan Somogyi (UNWTO Executive Director for Programme and Coordination), integrates representatives of UNWTO Member States, International Organizations and the private sector.

Madrid, Spain, 14 February 2017
PR No. 17017

Portugal commits to the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017

Portugal has committed to partnering with the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017. The commitment was presented to UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai, during his recent official visit to Portugal. Among the initiatives to celebrate the Year, Portugal is promoting the rehabilitation of historical buildings in the interior of the country and routes through natural areas.

On the occasion, Mr. Rifai and Portuguese authorities discussed the role of tourism in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

as well as the contribution of tourism to job creation and economic growth in Portugal.

Meeting with Prime Minister Antonio Costa, Mr Rifai addressed the mechanisms of coordination among Ministries to advance tourism development in the country as well as issues of air transport and the relevance of new source markets such as China.

Mr Rifai also met President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, with whom he discussed the importance of raising the public visibility of the socio-economic impact of tourism.

Tourism and the SDGs and visa facilitation were on the agenda of the meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Santos Silva. Meeting with the Minister of Economy, Caldeira Cabral, and the Secretary of State for Tourism, Ana Mendes Godinho, Mr. Rifai discussed Portugal's "Revive" Programme aimed at promoting the rehabilitation of historic buildings through private sector investment, as well as the policies in place to promote the regional spread of tourism and fight seasonality.

The visit included the presentation of Portugal 4.0, a project aimed at promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector and one of the finalists of the 2016 UNWTO Awards.

Mr. Rifai also visited Madeira, whose Secretary of Economy, Tourism and Culture Eduardo Jesus presented UNWTO with Madeira's regional tourism strategy. Issues in discussion included the project "Porto Santo free Fossil Island".

During his stay in Madeira, Mr Rifai welcomed five hotel chains (Quinta do Furão, Savoy Hotels & Resorts, Pestana Hotel Group, Porto Bay Hotels & Resorts and FourViews Hotels) which joined the Private Sector Commitment to the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics, pledging to implement and promote the principles of the Code and report on their actions.

To date, 499 companies and associations from 67 countries – from airlines and hotels, to tour operators and associations – have committed to uphold ethical standards and live by the Code in their operations.

Madrid, Spain, 1 March 2017
PR No. 17020

Future international standard on accessible tourism for all

From the initiative of the ONCE Foundation, the Spanish Association for Standardization (UNE) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the first working meeting for the development of an International Standard on Accessible Tourism for All was held in Madrid on 13-14 February.

The Technical Committee TC 228, responsible for tourism and related services within the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), will develop a global and transversal international standard that will

include, initially, a systematic inventory of existing standards, technical criteria, recommendations and requirements in the field of accessible tourism. In addition, recommendations and requirements will be suggested for those segments of the value chain and related activities whose international standardization in terms of accessibility is still pending.

The future standards will be called “ISO 21902 Tourism and related services—Tourism for all—Requirements and recommendations”. In terms of scope, the new standard will set clear guidelines for tourism planning and destination management.

According to Jesús Hernández, Director of Universal Accessibility and Innovation of the ONCE Foundation, the new standard will be “a lever to promote Design for All in such an important economic sector as tourism at the world level. In many cases persons with disabilities cannot exercise their rights to leisure and the enjoyment of culture and tourism. This is discrimination. In addition, from an economic point of view, tourism activity that is designed for all people represents a source of wealth creation”.

For his part, Márcio Favilla, UNWTO Executive Director, emphasized that universal accessibility is a right and a business opportunity for destinations and companies: “Accessible tourism is the answer to everyone’s universal right to travel and discover the world. At the same time, it is an opportunity for the tourism industry to capture a global marketplace that includes millions of people with disabilities, seniors, families with young children and many others who encounter numerous barriers, both physical and cultural, when travelling.”

Javier García, Director of Standardization of the Spanish Association for Standardization (UNE), stated that “technical standards are documents available to all, which contain the consensus of all parties related to globally-accepted good practices, helping organizations to establish their criteria for action. Currently, the Spanish catalogue contains 75 standards and draft standards that establish the accessibility requirements in many areas, benefiting persons with disabilities and their families, as well as society in general”. UNE is the entity responsible for the development of technical standards in Spain and is the national representative at international and European standardization bodies.

To date, the working group established under ISO TC228 has representatives from Panama, Austria, the United Kingdom, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Portugal, Argentina, Malta, Canada, Ireland and Spain, as well as representatives of associations such as ENAT (European Network of Accessible Tourism), HOTREC (European Association of Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés), ECTAA (European Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents), SBS (Small Business Standards, the European association representing SMEs in standardization), and ANEC (the European consumer association for standardization)

The new standard, which is expected to be approved in 2018 after

reaching consensus at the ISO level and promulgated during 2019, will be applied to the different stakeholders of the tourism sector, both public and private and at different levels.

Madrid, Spain, 22 February 2017
PR No. 17021

UNWTO Headquarters hosts the launch of Spanish stamps of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017

UNWTO Headquarters in Madrid hosted the presentation on Tuesday of two Spanish stamps commemorating the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

The United Nations declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, highlighting the potential of tourism to be a pillar of a sustainable, inclusive and equitable future for all.

UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai recalled that the Year aims to inspire change among all those involved in tourism, including tourists themselves, so that they are mindful of their role in travelling with respect for cultural heritage, the environment and the hosts that welcome them.

“This stamp is one of the key tools to reach all those travelling in Spain and engage them in making a positive impact. We are extremely grateful to the Spanish government and to Correos (the Spanish National Post Office) for this initiative”, said Secretary-General Rifai.

“It is always a pleasure to present a new stamp but, in this case, my gratification is greater because these stamps are dedicated to tourism, one of the most important emblems of our country,” underlined Javier Cuesta Nuin, President of Correos.

With a circulation of 14,000,000, the stamp will promote responsible tourism among Spaniards and the millions that every year visit Spain.

Madrid, Spain, 28 February 2017
PR No. 17023

UNWTO Secretary General attends Bahrain's Spring of Cultures Festival

At the invitation of H.E. Shaikha Mai Bint Mohammed Al-Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities and Chairperson of the Board of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage, UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, attended the celebrations of

Bahrain's Spring of Cultures Festival, which coincided with Arab Tourism Day on February 25.

This was an occasion to stress the importance of cultural preservation and the links between tourism and culture particularly in the scope of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

"2017, declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, is a unique opportunity to promote the value of tourism to in the preservation of our values, diversity and heritage. Tourism revives traditional activities and customs, empowers communities and nurtures pride within them, promoting cultural diversity and raising awareness of the value of heritage", said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

On the occasion, Mr Rifai was presented with the advances in the development of the Path of Pearls, including the restoration of several traditional houses in Manama.

Bahrain island society developed an economic, cultural and social system that was based on a singular source of income, a natural product of incomparable beauty: the pearls of Bahrain. The unique story of pearling in Bahrain and its physical testimony in Muharraq is now listed by UNESCO as World Heritage site.

"I would like to commend the immense efforts of H.E. Shaikha Mai Bint Mohammed Al-Khalifa in preserving and promoting culture in Bahrain and its relationship with tourism", added Mr Rifai.

UNWTO has been long promoting the development of cultural tourism routes as a means to advance regional integration and economic development, namely through its long standing Silk Road Tourism Programme.

As part of Bahrain's Spring of Cultures Festival, Mr Rifai also attended the Lebanese opera show "Antar and Abla" at the Bahrain National Theater.

In recognition of her contribution to the promotion of sustainable cultural tourism, UNWTO will designate H.E. Shaikha Mai Bint Mohammad Al-Khalifa as Special Ambassador for the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 at a special ceremony at UNWTO Headquarters in Madrid on March 24, 2017.

Madrid, Spain, 2 March 2017
PR No. 17024

Sustainability, new platform tourism services and Silk Road focus of UNWTO activities at ITB 2017

UNWTO activities at the 51th edition of ITB, taking place next 8-12 March in Berlin, include the 7th UNWTO Silk Road Ministers Meeting, events on the New Platform Tourism Services (or the so- called sharing economy), Child Protection and Indigenous Tourism.

Expected to gather around 20 Ministers of Tourism, the Silk Road Ministerial Meeting (8 March) will address the contribution of tourism to Sustainable Tourism and Local Communities.

On the 9th March, UNWTO will debate the New Platform Tourism Services (or the so-called sharing economy) with a focus on how it impacts on destinations and how are destinations addressing these new services.

In addition, also on the 9th March, UNWTO organizes the 32nd Meeting of the World Tourism Network on Child Protection and a Panel on Indigenous Tourism, underlining the relevance of inclusive practices to approach local communities in order to achieve a more sustainable tourism sector.

The World Tourism Network on Child Protection serves as a platform for tourism stakeholders to exchange good practices and discuss the most pressing challenges in curbing child and youth exploitation in the tourism sector, including sexual exploitation, child labor and trafficking. The Network draws together governments, the tourism industry, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and media associations.

“ITB is always vibrant and interesting, but this year it acquires a higher relevance as we are celebrating the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 and this highly prominent fair provides one of the best platform to advocate responsible tourism worldwide,” said UNWTO Secretary General, Taleb Rifai.

Madrid, Spain, 03 March 2017
PR No. 17024

UNWTO appoints King Simeon II ambassador of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

Simeon II received from the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) the certificate accrediting him as an ambassador of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, which is being observed globally throughout 2017. The figure of Ambassadors of the International Year was presented last January at the launching of the Year that took place in the context of FITUR in Madrid.

Speaking at the ceremony held at the UNWTO headquarters in Madrid, UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai emphasized: “When designating 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the United Nations recognized tourism’s contribution to the development agenda, to peace, equality and prosperity. I am very touched to see that King Simeon II shares this same vision on the power of tourism and I truly thank him for his commitment to spread this important message across the world.”

Simeon II expressed gratitude for his appointment as ambassador of the International Year and stressed the importance of tourism in moving

towards a more sustainable and fairer world. “One of the most important objectives of the Year is to raise awareness among the international population as well as institutions about the potential of tourism to promote culture, exchanges or the elimination of prejudices,” said the newly appointed ambassador of the Year.

In addition to Simeon II, the UNWTO has appointed the following ambassadors of the International Year: H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia; H.R.H. Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities; Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman of the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization; Michael Frenzel, President of the Federal Association of the German Tourism Industry (BTW); and Ge Huayong, Chairman of China UnionPay.

Madrid, Spain, 6 March 2017
PR No. 17026

UNWTO advances the conversion of the Code of Ethics into an international Convention

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is working to convert the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism into an international Convention, in order to increase the commitment of all stakeholders to its principles. The process is being led by an intergovernmental Working Group composed of representatives of 36 UNWTO Member States.

While extremely relevant for the tourism sector, the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, adopted in 1999, represents a voluntary instrument whereas, the future Convention on Tourism Ethics would constitute a binding instrument.

“For UNWTO to have its first International Convention based on its cornerstone policy document would be of great significance, especially at a time when the uninterrupted growth of international tourist arrivals has reached a record of 1.2 billion in 2016, doubling the figures of tourism in 1999, year in which the Global Code of Ethics was adopted”, said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

The Working Group on the UNWTO Convention on Tourism Ethics discussed the text of the Draft Convention during two intense working sessions in its second meeting, held on 30-31 January 2017. The draft text will now be presented to the 105th session of the UNWTO Executive Council, to be held on 11-12 May 2017 in Madrid, Spain. The Executive Council will then be followed by a third meeting of the Working Group to which UNWTO Full and Associate Members are invited to participate.

Following the roadmap agreed by the Working Group, the Convention will be presented for consideration and possible adoption to the 22nd UNWTO General Assembly, to take place in Chengdu, China, on 6-9 September 2017.

If approved, the Convention would represent an important step for UNWTO as a specialized agency of the United Nations, as it would be the first international treaty of the Organization. The adoption of the draft Convention on Tourism Ethics this year would be particularly timely since 2017 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

Madrid, Spain, 8 March 2017
PR No. 17027

Tourism opens our hearts and our minds: UNWTO Secretary-General at ITB Berlin

Tourism can transform our world and build better understanding in a world living a deficit of tolerance said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, at the opening ceremony of the 2017 edition of ITB Berlin (Berlin, Germany, 7 March 2016).

“We live the worst of times and the best of times. Times when we wake up every other day with the threat of terrorism at our doorstep and the glooming numbers of unemployment. Times of isolationism and ill-conceived actions like travel bans, which do not lead to increased security but just to growing tension. Despite all these complex and interlinked challenges, despite acts against the freedom of travel, the power of tourism continues to shine through the darkness” said Mr Rifai.

Quoting the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, he said, “Beyond the measurable advances that tourism can make possible, it is also a bridge to better mutual understanding among people from all walks of life.”

In this context, Mr Rifai recalled the declaration of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development by the United Nations is a clear recognition of the potential contribution of tourism to social progress, equality and prosperity and peace and that tourism must be at the forefront of the 2020 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“In a world that seems increasingly short of tolerance and generosity, we should cherish tourism as a precious pillar of peace amongst communities and nations.” he said.

“We all need to ensure that, as our sector grows, it contributes to the wellbeing of the world and not to its peril. Tourism must fulfil its responsibility to contribute to all 17 universal Sustainable Development Goals” he added.

Madrid, Spain, 9 March 2017
PR No. 17028

Silk Road destinations committed to sustainable tourism

The 7th UNWTO Silk Road Ministers Meeting held at ITB Berlin on 8 March 2017 focused on how to foster sustainable tourism development along the Silk Road. Held within the framework of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017, 31 countries from the Silk Road and beyond exchanged best-practice on how to advance the contribution of tourism to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Addressing the meeting and setting the tone for the ministerial debate, UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, said “2015 was a landmark year with the approval of the universal SDGs by the international community. Tourism can contribute to all 17 Goals. Indeed, if properly managed, tourism can positively help address all the interconnected challenges facing people and planet including ending poverty, promoting gender equality, fostering jobs and inclusive growth and fighting climate change.

Moderated by Christa Larwood from the BBC, ministers and high level officials shared their views and experiences in promoting sustainable tourism, in areas of heritage protection, community participation, sustainable business practices and the development of niche tourism itineraries and products. Two presentations, the celebration of the World Nomad Games in Kyrgyzstan and community integration in West Bengal (India), highlighted the potential and multiple benefits to be derived from a sustainable tourism path.

Important input was also contributed by UNWTO Affiliate Member, TripAdvisor, who presented the findings of the TripAdvisor Travel Trends for the Silk Road 2017. For the second consecutive year, TripAdvisor conducted a specialised consumer survey assessing travel preferences, habits and interests along the Silk Road. Research highlights that among top interest areas while travelling along the Silk Road are visiting UNESCO World Heritage Sites, experiencing local gastronomy and attending local festivals and events.

On the occasion, Greece’s Minister of Tourism, Elena Kountoura, announced the hosting of the First Western Silk Road Workshop in Alexandroupolis, Greece, on 26-27 April 2017.

The UNWTO Silk Road Programme is a collaborative initiative designed to enhance sustainable tourism development along the historic Silk Road routes. It aims to maximize the benefits of tourism development for local Silk Road communities, while stimulating investment and promoting the conservation of the route’s natural and cultural heritage. Currently the Silk Road Programme engages 33 UNWTO Members States, UN agencies, UNWTO Affiliate Members, as well as an extensive network of private sector stakeholders. The 7th UNWTO Silk Road Task Force meeting will be held in Valencia, Spain on 30-31 March 2017.

Governments need to lead the protection of children in tourism – UNWTO World Tourism Network on Child Protection meets in Berlin

The 32nd meeting of the UNWTO World Tourism Network on Child Protection focused on the role of governments in advancing the fight against the exploitation of children in tourism (9 March 2017).

“Child protection is the responsibility of all - communities, private sector, academia, but governments have a leading role to play” said Carol Bellamy, Chair of the Network, opening the meeting.

“There is a bright and black side to tourism; we need to recognize the black side exists and address it with no shame. We need zero tolerance to any form of child exploitation. We cannot allow the tourism infrastructure to be used for this and shouldn’t have any issues in exposing such situations”, said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

The meeting, which was attended by the Ministers of Tourism of Ghana and Sudan, was an opportunity to share best practices from India (TMB), Kenya, Maldives, Myanmar, the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), the World Childhood Foundation, and Uruguay representing the Regional Task Force for the Protection of Children in Travel and Tourism of the Americas (GARA), which Uruguay presides since last year.

Cross-government coordination and commitment as well as cross-sectoral cooperation were pointed out as key factors to advance child protection in tourism.

The World Tourism Network on Child Protection (formerly the Task Force for the Protection of Children in Tourism) is an open-ended network featuring the multi-stakeholder participation of a range of tourism stakeholders, from governments, international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to tourism industry groups and media associations. Originally formed in 1997, since 2007 its mandate has been to prevent all forms of youth exploitation in the tourism sector (i.e. sexual exploitation, child labour and child trafficking).

The Network’s meetings, held annually at the worlds’ foremost Travel and Tourism Fairs, serve as a platform for key actors to exchange experiences and best practices, present awareness-raising materials and capacity building tools, and promote the adoption of professional codes of conduct or other responsible practices in line with the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

The activities of the World Tourism Network on Child Protection are co-ordinated by the UNWTO Secretariat and monitored by an Executive Committee established in November 2000.

Madrid, Spain, 16 March 2017
PR No. 17030

Tourism and economic growth under the spotlight at UNWTO & Arabian Travel Market Ministerial Forum 2017

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are expected to welcome 195 million international tourists by 2030. Between 25 million and 50 million new jobs will be required in the region over the next decade. Over 20 Ministers and industry leaders will gather at the Ministerial Forum to discuss how tourism can play a role in the future of the MENA region.

Visitors to the MENA region will total 195 million by 2030, growing at a rate higher than the world average, according to figures by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The rapid development of the sector will form part of the discussion at the UNWTO & ATM Ministerial Forum at the Arabian Travel Market, taking place on April 24 in the Dubai World Trade Centre, United Arab Emirates. The Forum, an official event of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 returns to ATM this year, with a particular focus on the contribution of tourism to sustainable economic growth and economic diversification of the MENA region.

“Tourism is an increasingly important sector to support the economic diversification of the region. In addition to generating foreign exchange earnings and creating jobs, tourism promotes trade and investment and significantly contributes to the development of other sectors of the economy - such as construction, manufacture, retail and financial services.” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

Simon Press, Senior Exhibition Director, ATM, said: “The Middle East has experienced huge changes since the UNWTO Ministers Forum was last held at ATM back in 2015. This year will reflect the pace and level of that development, uniting more than 20 ministers with industry leaders in the MENA region to consider methods of capitalising on tourism growth and building a sustainable ecosystem for the sector to unlock its potential within each country’s National Agenda. Specific areas of focus will include GDP growth and economic diversification, innovation, entrepreneurship and productivity, job creation, human capital and infrastructure development, investment and export promotion.”

The Forum is one of a number of events in the year-long programme of official activities of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

In his message on the occasion of the Year, United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, said: “Tourism has become a pillar of economies, a passport to prosperity, and a transformative force for improving millions of lives. The world can and must harness the power of tourism as we strive to carry out the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

Taking place on Monday, 24 April from 3.30pm, the Forum will be held under the patronage of H.E. Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Economy of the United Arab Emirates. This will follow the 42nd meeting of the UNWTO Commission for the Middle East which is being held at 10am in the morning.

The Forum will address the following issues:

- Empowering evidence based decision making and accurate measurement of the contribution of tourism to current and future economic growth - particularly as regards GDP, jobs and exports - and its multiplier effect on other sectors of the economy.
- Enhancing the contribution of domestic tourism alongside international tourism (especially intra-regional) in delivering sustainable economic growth from the sector.
- Main challenges and opportunities for securing investment in tourism (FDI and domestic investment).
- Strategies and measures to strengthen tourism's resilience to external shocks.
- Ensuring that economic growth due to tourism leads to the sustainable and inclusive development of host communities and the transition towards a green economy.
- Investing in technology - driven innovations to enhance performance and improve competitiveness.
- Policies to promote job creation and entrepreneurship
- Strengthening the sector's institutional framework, engaging and aligning key governmental role players on tourism policy issues and targets and developing result driven partnerships with local and international stakeholders.

Madrid, Spain, 20 March 2017
PR No. 17031

UNWTO Secretary-General welcomes Japan's support for tourism when meeting with Prime Minister Abe

The Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Taleb Rifai, applauded Japan's commitment to tourism development as one of the significant pillars of the socio-economic agenda during a recent official visit to Japan. Meeting Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Mr Rifai welcomed Japan's Action Program for Tourism focused on infrastructure development, visa facilitation and technology.

"Japan will continue to promote tourism and stress its great potential in people to people understanding as well as its important role in rural area development", said Prime Minister Abe.

On the occasion, Mr. Rifai presented Prime Minister Abe with the Open Letter on Travel and Tourism, an initiative jointly led by UNWTO and the

World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) to advocate tourism and its role to the development of nations.

Mr Rifai congratulated Prime Minister Abe on the impressive development of the tourism sector since he took office in 2013 and highlighted the potential that tourism has to bring development to all the areas of Japan. In 2016, Japan received 24 million international tourists, an increase of 22% as compared to 2015. Japan set as a target to increase the number of foreign tourists to 40 million by 2020, and to 60 million by 2030.

“Japan is showing a clear leadership in tourism development by placing tourism high in its socio-economic agenda. We thank Prime Minister Abe for its vision and leadership and look forward to continuing working with Japan to achieve its set target of 40 million international tourists by 2020”, said Mr Rifai.

David Scowsill, President & CEO, WTTC, said: “Japan is a country which has long recognized the power of our sector to drive economic growth. Travel & Tourism contributes 7.4% to the country’s GDP and generates over 4.5 million jobs, or 6.9% of total employment in the country. Japan ranks 4th in the world for Travel & Tourism GDP. We encourage the government to continue its great efforts to stimulate Japan’s Travel & Tourism sector, focusing on creating products to attract new markets and continuing to invest in infrastructure to absorb future demand in the country.”

Mr Rifai also met the Governor of Yamagata Prefecture, Mieko Yoshimura, to announce the forthcoming UNWTO Conference on Tourism and Snow-Related Activities, to be held in February 2018. The event is aimed at supporting the recovery of the Tohoku region (Northern) from the 2011 earthquake. It is also part of the efforts of UNWTO to support Japan in diversifying its tourism offer to less known tourism areas.

The visit was also an occasion to inaugurate the Tokyo Liaison Office of the UNWTO Regional Support Office for Asia and the Pacific RSOAP based in Nara in the presence of the 17 UNWTO Affiliate Members of Japan and 200 key tourism leaders and stakeholders. The office will provide supplementary support to the activities being carried out from the Nara-based office.

Besides his encounter with Prime Minister Abe, Mr Rifai held meetings with Mr. Yoshihiro Nikai, Secretary-General of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Mr. Keiichi Ishii, the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), Mr. Nobuo Kishi, State Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr. Akihiko Tamura, Commissioner of Japan Tourism Agency (MLIT), all of whom expressed their support to the tourism sector and the work of UNWTO.

On the occasion, UNWTO Secretary-General also addressed the research commission for the establishment of a tourism oriented nation of the LDP and met with the representatives of the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), the Japan Association of Travel Agents

(JATA), the Japan Travel and Tourism Association (JTТА), JTB Corp., TOYO University, All Nippon Airways (ANA), Gurunavi Inc. and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

JICA and UNWTO recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed to contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through tourism with a particular focus in assisting developing countries to reduce poverty through tourism as well as to improve public policies and business practices.

Madrid, Spain, 21 March 2017
PR No. 17032

UNWTO Seminar addresses tourism development in the Russian regions of the Silk Road

The potential of tourism itineraries and products in the Russian regions of Silk Road has centred the debates of a Seminar conducted last 12 March in Moscow by UNWTO. The Seminar was held in the framework of the UNWTO Silk Road Programme in cooperation with the Russian Federal Agency for Tourism and the Intourmarket Tourism Fair.

The relevance of Silk Road tourism itineraries and products in Russia as well as marketing and branding opportunities received major attention during the Seminar facilitated in Moscow by the UNWTO Silk Road Programme. The event was attended by representatives of the Russian regions and tourism stakeholders from the public and private sector.

Moderated by Leonid Gelibterman, President of the International Center of Wine and Gastronomy of the Russian Federation, the event was an excellent platform to exchange and showcase best practices.

The regions of Astrakhan and Caucasus, and the Republics of Dagestan, Tatarstan, Altai and Buryatia, showcased innovative tourism offers based on their Silk Road heritage. Gastronomy, natural splendor and intangible heritage were identified as key elements that will drive the development of Silk Road tourism in Russia.

One of the major conclusions of the Seminar was the need to continue working towards the establishment of a trans-regional cooperation framework for the Russian regions on the Silk Road. This and other topics will be at the core of the International Conference on the Gastronomic Routes of the Silk Road to be held in Astrakhan, Russia, next July.

The UNWTO Silk Road Programme is a collaborative initiative designed to enhance sustainable tourism development along the historic Silk Road routes. It aims to maximize the benefits of tourism development for local Silk Road communities, while stimulating investment and promoting the conservation of the route's natural and cultural heritage.

Currently the Silk Road Programme engages 33 UNWTO Members

States, UN agencies, UNWTO Affiliate Members, as well as an extensive network of private sector stakeholders.

The 7th UNWTO Silk Road Task Force meeting will be held in Valencia, Spain on 30-31 March 2017.

Madrid, Spain, 22 March 2017

PR No. 17033

UNWTO welcomes Morocco as a partner of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017

Morocco has become the latest country to join UNWTO as partner of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017. The commitment was delivered at the Moroccan Day of Sustainable and Responsible Tourism held on 20 March in Rabat.

Morocco has become the latest partner of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

On the occasion of the Moroccan Day of Sustainable and Responsible Tourism on 20 March, the government of Morocco committed to support the International Year and advance the promotion of the first African Charter on Sustainable and Responsible Tourism.

The African Charter on Sustainable and Responsible Tourism, signed last November in Marrakesh during the Ministerial Forum on Tourism and Climate in Africa, on the sidelines of the COP22, aims at becoming an instrumental tool for the continent to engage in sustainable tourism best practices by reconciling social and economic growth, the preservation of the environment and the respect for the cultural diversity of each country.

“The commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco with the tourism sector is remarkable, not only by joining now the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, but also by other gestures done in the past such as partnering with the World Tourism Organization in promoting more responsible practices and leading the process of adoption of the African Charter” said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

The United Nations 70th General Assembly has designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. In the context of the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the International Year aims to support a change in policies, business practices and consumer behavior towards a more sustainable tourism sector than can contribute to the SDGs.

The IY2017 will promote tourism’s role in the following five key areas: (1) Inclusive and sustainable economic growth; (2) Social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction; (3) Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change; (4) Cultural values, diversity and heritage; and (5) Mutual understanding, peace and security.

Madrid, Spain, 24 March 2017
PR No. 17036

UNWTO appoints Shaikha Mai Bint Mohammed Al-Khalifa as Ambassador of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

The President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities and Chairperson of the Board of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage, Shaikha Mai Bint Mohammed Al-Khalifa, has been appointed as Special Ambassador of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

In the resolution that adopts the Year, the UN General Assembly specifically stresses how tourism can foster “better understanding among peoples everywhere, leading to a greater awareness of the rich heritage of various civilizations and bringing about a better appreciation of the inherent values of different cultures”.

The ceremony, conducted at the Headquarters of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in Madrid, Spain, praised the role that Shaikha Al-Khalifa has played in advancing culture as a key component of tourism development in Bahrain and the Middle East, through the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage.

“Your Excellency is an example for all of us in the work she does in Bahrain to promote and protect culture, to link tourism and heritage and to bring culture to life” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, in the ceremony.

“It is an honor to be selected as an ambassador to UNWTO in this special Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. I believe that now more than ever tourism and culture have a vital role to play in promoting peace and understanding and in encouraging a dialogue between civilizations, not walls between nations. Coming from the Arab region, the cradle of civilizations and the home to many of the world iconic heritage sites; a region traditionally known for its hospitality and acceptance of the other, I believe that cultural tourism can be an effective tool for sustainable development. Tourism add an economic value to the historical value of all cultural sites, it creates jobs, revitalize crafts and generates revenues for people wherever they are. I also believe that tourists enjoying a cultural tourism experience, they themselves become the best ambassadors of what the Arab World has got to offer,” said in her intervention Shaikha Mai Bint Mohammed Al-Khalifa.

Shaikha Mai Bint Mohammed Al-Khalifa will join as Ambassadors of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman of Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization, Michael Frenzel, President of the Federal Association of the German Tourism Industry (BTW) and Huayong Ge, CEO of UnionPay.

Madrid, Spain, 27 March 2017
PR No. 17037

The role of tourism in reducing poverty discussed at UNWTO Workshop in China

The power of tourism to induce poverty reduction and development constituted the main focus of the UNWTO Workshop held in Guangdong, China. The workshop was conducted under the framework of the agreement signed between UNWTO and the Chimelong Group in 2016 designed to support sustainable tourism and wildlife protection through tourism.

Raising awareness on the relevance of the tourism sector in the reduction of poverty and promoting knowledge sharing on best practices constitute the major objectives of the Workshop for Poverty Reduction and Tourism Development held in Guangdong. The event takes place in a highly relevant momentum as 2017 is celebrated as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, a global campaign lead by UNWTO.

“Guangdong, one of the top economic hubs in China, is one of the best examples of what is happening in China in terms of the links between development and tourism and therefore it is a perfect location to conduct this event” said UNWTO Secretary General, Taleb Rifai.

“We sincerely appreciate the agreement with UNWTO that includes a number of initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism and wildlife conservation, which are very much in line with our philosophy ‘Wherever Chimelong goes, the happiness follows’ as our CEO, Su Zhigang highlights,” said Chen Wancheng, President of Guangdong Chimelong Group.

Accounting for 6.3% of GDP, tourism is one of the most important sectors in Guangdong. The province receives more than 300 million domestic tourists annually and around 35 million international tourists.

The workshop included case studies from the UNWTO ST-EP Project Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme, the UNWTO Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories and from activities conducted by Chimelong in the Guangdong Province. Representatives of Provincial Tourist Authorities and Provincial Tourism Organizations, in particular from the Guangdong Province, stakeholders from the private sector and Chinese NGOs attended the event.

International Tourists to the European Union reach almost half a billion in 2016

International tourist arrivals to the European Union increased by 4% in 2016, reaching almost 500 million or 40% of the world's total. This preliminary result is included in the first release of the 'European Union Short-Term Tourism Trends', a regular monitoring of EU tourism by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in the framework of the cooperation with the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROWTH) of the European Commission (EC).

Despite many challenges facing Europe in 2016, tourism has once again shown extraordinary strength and resilience, reinforcing its contribution to economic growth, job creation and social wellbeing in the European Union (EU-28).

The 28 countries of the EU boasted a solid growth in international tourist arrivals of above 4% in 2016, exceeding the world's average growth rate, and increasing by 21 million to 499 million.

2016 was the 7th consecutive year of sustained growth for the EU-28 following the 2009 global economic and financial crisis, with 107 million more tourists than the pre-crisis level of 2008.

"Tourism is today one of the key pillars of the EU strategy for jobs and inclusive growth. UNWTO is very pleased to be working alongside the European Commission in monitoring international tourism trends, advance product development and sustainable tourism in Europe", said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

About the 'Enhancing the Understanding of European Tourism' Project
'Enhancing the Understanding of European Tourism' is a joint project by UNWTO and the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs of the European Commission (DG GROWTH). The project aims to improve the socio-economic knowledge of the tourism sector, enhance the understanding of European tourism and contribute towards economic growth, job creation, thus improving the competitiveness of the sector in Europe. The project includes three components: 1) increased cooperation and capacity building in tourism statistics; 2) assessment of tourism market trends; 3) promotion of cultural tourism through the Western Silk Road and; 4) promoting sustainable, responsible, accessible and ethical tourism.

The project is co-financed with COSME funds and will run until February 2018.

UNWTO welcomes the celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity on 'Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism'

The Convention on Biological Diversity of the United Nations has chosen 'Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism' as the theme for the International Day for Biological Diversity. The celebration takes place annually on 22 May. The decision aims at supporting the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development which is being commemorated worldwide throughout 2017.

The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, declared by the United Nations General Assembly, emphasizes among others the role of the tourism sector in the preservation of ecosystems and in raising awareness on the uniqueness of biodiversity.

Following these principles, the Convention on Biological Diversity of the United Nations has decided to dedicate the International Day for Biological Diversity, which is yearly celebrated on May 22 to 'Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism'.

As stated by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, "We very much welcome the decision taken by the Convention on Biological Diversity to emphasize the link between tourism and biodiversity. Tourism is one of the best placed sectors to contribute to inclusive and sustainable development and, with the right policies in place, to preserving ecosystems, biodiversity and natural heritage".

The contribution of tourism to conservation is increasingly recognized by the international community. The Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Wellbeing released on the occasion of COP 13 (the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity) held in Mexico last December, recalls that "tourism is an excellent vehicle to use in spreading environmental awareness worldwide, not to mention the livelihood support it provides for communities living in and around reserves and natural areas" and recognises that tourism can be an enabling agent of change.

Monitoring, land planning, development of bio-cultural wealth and the promotion of technologies to transform tourism in a preservation tool of biological diversity are some of the components integrated in sustainable tourism approaches. This view also emphasizes the potential of tourism to raise environmental awareness worldwide on the value of protected areas.

In this regard, UNWTO has been long working to strengthen the capacity to monitor the impact of the tourism sector and build evidence-based approaches to tourism development. The UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) is a network of

tourism observatories monitoring the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism at the destination level, committed to regular monitoring of tourism in order to better understand destination-wide resource use and foster the responsible management of tourism. There are 16 observatories currently in operation worldwide.

Madrid, Spain, 4 April 2017
PR No. 17040

The Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Sonoma, California, becomes the 17th member of the UNWTO International Network

Located in California (USA), the Sonoma County Sustainable Tourism Observatory is the latest member having successfully joined the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO). This comes in a very unique momentum as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development is being celebrated worldwide.

UNWTO has welcomed the incorporation of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of the Sonoma County, in California, to the International Network of Tourism Observatories (INSTO). The observatory is the first of its kind under the umbrella of the Coalition to Observe and Advance Sustainable Tourism (COAST), aiming to serve as an anchor for a possible network of Pacific Coast observatories, connecting key tourism destinations along the Pacific Coast of North America, stretching from San Francisco and the Channel Islands in the south to Vancouver and Victoria BC in the north.

“We highly welcome the incorporation of the Tourism Observatory of the Sonoma County as a new member of the Network and we are sure that it will help us to achieve the mission of this platform throughout 2017 and beyond,” said UNWTO Secretary General Taleb Rifai.

The Observatory of the Sonoma County is strategically based 45 minutes North of the Golden Gate Bridge and the metropolitan areas of San Francisco and Silicon Valley. Due to its proximity to major innovation hubs and its abundant variety of culinary and scenic attractions, the area attracts millions of visitors every year.

The new member will focus on areas such as the scarcity of water, the impacts of agricultural-tourism growth in a complex and sensitive environment, climate change responsiveness and resilience, the viable regeneration of essential public places such as state parks, employment and local living opportunities, among others.

The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development prominently features the need for evidence-driven development of tourism that is based on participatory, inclusive and timely monitoring exercises.

"We're honored to be included in the roster of INSTO Observatories. It is our aim to share the best practices which have been developed over the past 40+ years of conservation awareness in Sonoma County, which help drive the flourishing tourism industry here. Thanks to our premier position as a wine destination we have much to document but also much to learn," said Pamela Lanier, Founder of COAST and Chair of the Sonoma Sustainable Tourism Observatory

"We are delighted that Sonoma County Observatory has been approved by the UNWTO and will join the Blue Community Observatory in Florida in the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories. These institutions are expected to play an important role in adding to the global body of knowledge in sustainable tourism," commented Isabel Hill, Director of the National Travel and Tourism Office at the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Madrid, Spain, 6 April 2017
PR No. 17041

UNWTO Silk Road Task Force Group discuss in Valencia a common framework for historic routes

Representatives from 24 countries of both private and public nature involved in the Silk Road Task Force have convened in the Mediterranean city of Valencia, Spain, to discuss strategies and best-practice examples on how to adapt the Silk Road to the challenges and opportunities of the globalized tourism age. The 7th UNWTO Silk Road Task Force event was held on 30-31 March 2017.

The discussions addressed the three pillars of the Silk Road Action Plan: i) marketing and promotion ii) destination management and capacity building and iii) travel facilitation. A specialised workshop session was also dedicated to the development of the Western link of the Silk Road. Greece, the host of the upcoming First Western Silk Road Workshop (Alexandroupolis, Greece; on 26-27 April 2017), and Bulgaria, who expressed its interest in hosting the Second Workshop, underlined their support and commitment to an initiative aimed at reviving Silk Road heritage located across Europe.

As expressed at the opening ceremony, by UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, "UNWTO is extremely grateful for the support and commitment of the region and the city of Valencia to our work and mission. As the only United Nations Agency with its Headquarters in Spain, it is always a pleasure to organize a meeting in our host country - a country that understands the value and benefits to be derived from tourism."

The opening ceremony also counted upon the presence of the Mayor of Valencia, Joan Ribó i Canut, and the Valencian Minister for Tourism,

Francesc Colomer, who underlined the international dimension of the meeting and the importance of the Silk Road as a vehicle for peaceful exchange and development: “The Silk Road surpasses the boundaries of geography and touches upon our inner self, thus making us more tolerant, humble and cultured,” he said.

Important input was also contributed by UNWTO Affiliate Member, TripAdvisor, who presented the findings of the TripAdvisor Travel Trends for the Silk Road 2017, and by Eulogio Bordas, President of THR, who addressed the challenges of joint Silk Road marketing. The Spanish Institute for Quality Tourism, the International Tourism Consulting Group - SOENT, the World Federation of Tourist Guides Association (WFTGA), the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the University of Valencia also contributed valuable input to the meeting.

Overall, the meeting showcased the good work being carried out by Valencia in terms of Silk Road promotion and public-private cooperation. Since Spain’s inclusion in the UNWTO Silk Road Programme in 2015, best-practice examples implemented by the Valencian region have included branding Valencia as the “city of Silk” in 2016 and the rehabilitation of important Silk Road heritage located within the region.

The 7th UNWTO Silk Road Task Force Meeting was jointly organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Agència Valenciana del Turisme and the Fundación Turismo València. Turkish Airlines supported the event and shared its actions in promoting route development and connectivity across the Silk Road.

Madrid, Spain, 6 April 2017
PR No. 17042

Sustainable Tourism Observatories: UNWTO welcomes collaboration between Guanajuato and Paraguay

UNWTO welcomes the agreement reached by the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Guanajuato (Mexico) and Paraguay to facilitate knowledge and technology transfer. Guanajuato is one of the 16 Observations in the UNWTO Network.

“We praise the agreement signed by the State Secretariat of Tourism of Guanajuato (SECTUR) and the National Tourism Secretariat of Paraguay (SENATUR) as an important step to increase the development of sustainable tourism observatories” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

The State Secretary of Tourism of Guanajuato, Fernando Oliver Rocha said “through this alliance, we aim at fostering public policies with regard to sustainable tourism practices”.

The Executive Secretary of Paraguay, Marcela Bacigalupo, recognized the relevance of the work of the UNWTO Observatories and underlined

the importance of engaging private sector in sustainable tourism initiatives. “UNWTO has referred to Guanajuato as one of the best Observatories in Latin America, so we are very glad to have undersigned this agreement,” she mentioned.

The Tourism Observatory of Guanajuato, the first in Latin American, became a member of the UNWTO International Network of Tourism Observatories in 2014. The first meeting held between SECTUR and SENATUR happened at the UNWTO International Meeting of Spanish Tourism Observatories, held in 2016.

The UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) is a network of tourism observatories monitoring the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism at the destination level, committed to regular monitoring of tourism in order to better understand destination-wide resource use and foster the responsible management of tourism. There are 16 observatories currently in operation worldwide.

Madrid, Spain, 7 April 2017
PR No. 17043

UN Statistical Commission encourages Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism

The 48th Session of United Nations Statistical Commission has supported the UNWTO-led initiative of developing an international framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST). The initiative, being implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division, aims to develop a new statistical framework for tourism — one that integrates the various dimensions of sustainable tourism (economic, environmental and social) and across relevant levels (global, national and subnational).

Overwhelming appreciation was expressed to the work of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA and the Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism, which is leading the development of the new framework. The Commission encouraged the development of a Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism as a priority to support more integrated policy in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in response to requests from Member States and various stakeholders.

It also highlighted the importance of linking the TSA to the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), the elaboration of a TSA Compilation Guide, and the need to enhance capacity building for measuring sustainable tourism, notably in compiling TSA.

Established in 1947, the Commission gathers Chief Statisticians from Member States and is the highest decision making body for international

statistical activities. The last time that the Statistical Commission discussed a UNWTO report was in 2008, when the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) framework was approved.

Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST) will be the central focus of the 6th International Conference on Tourism Statistics: Measuring Sustainable Tourism, to be held in Manila, the Philippines, 21-24 June 2017.

The Manila Conference is an Official Event of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017 and will be a landmark opportunity to discuss methodological advances, explore emerging issues and learn from pioneering country experiences. A Ministerial Roundtable will kick-start the Conference to underline the importance of measurement in better understanding the role that sustainable tourism plays in fostering economic growth, social inclusiveness, and the protection of cultural and natural assets.

Madrid, Spain, 12 April 2017
PR No. 17044

UNWTO welcomes the Waikato Tourism Monitoring Observatory in New Zealand to its INSTO Network

The Waikato Tourism Monitoring Observatory, New Zealand's first tourism observatory, has joined the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO). Committed to regular and timely measurement of tourism and its impacts and hosted by the University of Waikato Management School, the observatory is focused on two major tourist locations in Waikato region - Raglan and Waitomo.

"New Zealand is an example of tourism sustainability and thus the incorporation of the Waikato Observatory to the UNWTO INSTO Network adds immense value to this global initiative," said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

"The Waikato Tourism Monitoring Observatory is a wonderful initiative that will provide valuable data over time to support the tourism sector to maximize its contribution to the economy, while ensuring our visitors enjoy high-quality experiences," said Paula Bennett, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism of New Zealand.

New Zealand's tourism sector is experiencing continuous growth and therefore requires an adequate measurement of tourism impacts. This observatory is crucial to providing tangible evidence for well-informed decision making in sustainable tourism development-related themes.

The Waikato Observatory seeks to support the strengthening of the world famous surfing town Raglan as a sustainable destination, while continuing to protect the unique landscapes and the biodiversity of

Waitomo and its iconic tourist attraction the Waitomo Caves. Overall, the Waikato region received 357,000 visitors in 2015, most of whom were domestic visitors (approx. 200,000).

Due to an already existing strong sense of community and engagement of its members especially in the more mature seaside tourism town Raglan, the observatory will start with focusing its monitoring efforts on crucial socio-cultural aspects such as 'local and visitor satisfaction'. Additional areas encompass 'destination economic benefits', 'tourism seasonality' and 'development control' in the short term, extending in the long-term to measurement activities related to waste management, housing issues, water supply, sewage management, among others.

INSTO is a network of tourism observatories monitoring the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism at the destination level, committed to regular monitoring of tourism in order to better understand destination-wide resource use and foster responsible tourism management. There are currently 18 observatories in operation worldwide.

Madrid, Spain, 12 April 2017

PR No. 17045

The potential of mountain tourism: focus of UNWTO Conference in Georgia

The potential of mountain tourism to foster economic development, as well as to raise awareness on environmental protection, was the major topic addressed at the 3rd World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Euro-Asian Mountain Resorts Conference. The event was held in Tbilisi, Georgia on 4-7 April, under the patronage of the Ministries of Tourism and of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia.

More than 300 participants from 32 countries gathered for the conference.

Opening the event, Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kvirikashvili said: "It is significant to note that mountains make up more than 65% of the country's landscape, and the government has been active in effectively using the aforementioned resource and advancing opportunities in tourism. According to various studies, Georgian ski destinations have the potential to generate more than 300 million US dollars in revenues from visitors. In this light, the Government of Georgia has focused considerable financial resources on sustainable development of the country's mountain destinations, including implementation of major infrastructural projects."

"Besides its economic potential for remote areas and isolated regions, mountain tourism is a key catalyst to raise awareness on sustainable tourism and to help us become more committed travelers, institutions and enterprises, a challenge especially pertinent at the present moment

as we are celebrating the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development,” said Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General.

The conference was structured around five key sessions conducted by 25 international speakers from 17 countries:

1. Sustainable tourism in mountain destinations: challenges and long-term outlook
2. Mountain resort planning: an integrated planning approach and illustration of good practices in developing mountain destinations
3. Investment and incentive policies: legislative framework and investment-friendly practices
4. Product diversification and attracting new markets: a strategic approach to improve the positioning of mountain destinations
5. New revolutionary tools for mountain destinations: innovation and the digital media

Prior to the conference, eight companies and associations joined the Private Sector Commitment to the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism: Adjara Group Hospitality; Caucasus Travel; Explore Georgia; Georgian Events, Georgian Incoming Tour Operators Association; Georgian Tourism Association (GTA); Living Roots; and Tourist Agency ‘VisitGeorgia’.

On the occasion, UNWTO Secretary-General Rifai was awarded the Order of Honor by Prime Minister Kvirikashvili for his contribution to the development of tourism in Georgia, for strengthening the relationship between UNWTO and Georgia, and for raising awareness about Georgia as a tourism destination internationally.

Madrid, Spain, 12 April 2017
PR No. 17046

Chinese tourists spent 12% more in travelling abroad in 2016

2016 results on expenditure from major outbound markets reflect increasing demand for international tourism across the world, as reported in the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. With a 12% increase in spending, China continued to lead international outbound tourism, followed by the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and France as top five spenders.

“The latest data on outbound tourism spending are very encouraging. Despite the many challenges of recent years, results of spending on travel abroad are consistent with the 4% growth to 1.2 billion international tourist arrivals reported earlier this year for 2016. People continue to have a strong appetite for travel and this benefits many countries all around the world, translating into economic growth, job creation and opportunities for development” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

Chinese tourists spent 12% more on tourism abroad in 2016

2016 was another strong year for outbound tourism from China, the world's leading outbound market. International tourism expenditure grew by US\$ 11 billion to US\$ 261 billion, an increase by 12% (in local currency). The number of outbound travellers rose 6% to 135 million in 2016. This growth consolidates China's position as number one source market in the world since 2012, following a trend of double-digit growth in tourism expenditure every year since 2004.

The growth in outbound travel from China benefited many destinations in Asia and the Pacific, most notably Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, but also long-haul destinations such as the United States and several in Europe.

Aside from China, three other Asian outbound markets among the first ten showed very positive results. The Republic of Korea (US\$ 27 billion) and Australia (US\$ 27 billion) both spent 8% more in 2016 and Hong Kong (China) entered the top 10 following 5% growth in expenditure (US\$ 24 billion).

Second largest market the United States maintains strength

Tourism spending from the United States – the world's second largest source market – increased 8% in 2016 to US\$ 122 billion, up US\$ 9 billion on 2015. For a third year in a row, strong outbound demand was fuelled by a robust US dollar and economy. The number of US residents travelling to international destinations increased 8% through November 2016 (74 million in 2015).

By contrast, Canada, the second source market from the Americas in the top ten, reported flat results, with US\$ 29 billion spent on international tourism, while the number of outbound overnight trips declined by 3% to 31 million.

Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy lead tourism spending in Europe

Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy are the four European markets in the top ten and all reported growth in outbound demand last year. Germany, the world's third largest market, reported 5% growth in international tourism spending last year, rebounding from weaker figures in 2015, reaching US\$ 81 billion.

Demand from the United Kingdom, the world's fourth largest source market, remained sound despite the significant depreciation of the British pound in 2016. UK residents' visits abroad were up by 5 million (+7%) in 2016 to 70 million, with expenditure close to US\$ 64 billion.

France, the world's fifth largest market, reported 7% growth in tourism expenditure in 2016 to reach US\$ 41 billion. Italy recorded 1% growth in spending to US\$ 25 billion and a 3% increase in overnight trips to 29 million.

Many more source markets report growing outbound expenditure

Among the largest 50 source markets, there were another nine that recorded double-digit growth in spending in 2016: Vietnam (+28%),

Argentina (+26%), Egypt (+19%), Spain (+17%), India (+16%), Israel and Ukraine (both +12%), Qatar and Thailand (both +11%).

By contrast, outbound tourism from some commodity exporters continued to be depressed as a consequence of their weaker economy and currencies. Expenditure from the Russian Federation declined further in 2016 to US\$ 24 billion. International tourism spending from Brazil also decreased in 2016.

Madrid, Spain, 19 April 2017
PR No. 17047

Saudi Arabia joins the celebrations of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017

Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz, Governor of Riyadh Region and Chairman of the Tourism Development Council of the region, His Royal Highness Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Chairman of Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) launched Saudi Arabia's celebrations of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017. The event took place at the opening of the 10th Travel and Tourism Investment Market in Saudi Arabia (26-30 March 2017).

SCTH participates in this international event through a number of tourism and cultural activities, programmes and media publications. This year the logo of the International Year was promoted throughout the Riyadh International Convention & Exhibition Center.

SCTH reaffirms its continued commitment to being a key partner of UNWTO in the promotion of sustainable tourism.

The International Year celebrations are led by UNWTO in cooperation with governments, relevant organizations of the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, and other stakeholders. The Year aims at raising awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism for development, drawing attention to the potential of tourism to foster economic growth, job creation and investment; and supporting a change in policies, business practices and consumer behaviour towards a more sustainable tourism sector.

The International Year includes advocacy activities promoting sustainable tourism as a tool for development, highlighting its role as a catalyst for economic development, and increasing awareness among all stakeholders – including tourists – of the impact of travel and tourism on society and the environment.

Madrid, Spain, 21 April 2017
PR No. 17048

Poland hosts UNWTO Congress on Ethics and Tourism

The 3rd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism, to take place in Krakow, Poland on 27-28 April 2017, will discuss ways to advance the commitment of tourism towards sustainable and responsible practices. The event is one of the major components of the 'Enhancing the Understanding of European Tourism' Project, conducted by UNWTO in cooperation with the European Commission.

Social responsibility champions, academics, private sector and representatives from national tourism administrations will meet in Krakow with civil society and international organizations to discuss how advance in the shared responsibilities of tourism development. The Congress acquires particular relevance as it takes place during the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, which is being celebrated worldwide throughout 2017.

The event, with the presence of Rajan Datar host of Fast Track - BBC World News' flagship travel programme, will feature the views of policy makers and companies such as NH Hotel Group, TripAdvisor, ClubMed, TUI, and Amadeus IT Group. National, regional and international organizations like the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), European Destinations of Excellence Network (EDEN), UNESCO World Heritage Centre and VisitScotland will also share their best practices.

Topics under discussion include strategic policy frameworks and models of governance as well as innovative and multi-stakeholder management models for the development of a more responsible and inclusive tourism sector.

Special attention will be devoted to the Tourism for All, the preservation of natural and cultural resources and best practices that contribute to socio-economic empowerment of local communities, women and youth.

The 3rd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism is organized by UNWTO in partnership with the Government of Poland and the European Commission.

Madrid, Spain, 25 April 2017
PR No. 17050

Tourism key for economic growth and diversification in the MENA region

Tourism can be a key driver of the growth and economic diversification for the Middle East and North Africa region concluded the 2017 Ministerial Forum organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

and the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) under the patronage of H.E. Eng. Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansoori, Minister of Economy of the United Arab Emirates. Yet, maximizing the power of the sector requires increased regional cooperation, prioritization of tourism in the national agendas and building resilience and sustainability (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 24 April, 2017).

Moderated by CNN Becky Anderson, the UNWTO/ATM Ministerial Forum concluded that the main priorities for the region include human resources development, public/private sector cooperation, connectivity, technology and sustainability.

Issues on discussion included the development of domestic tourism by engaging repeat travellers, the support to innovation and entrepreneurship, the need to improve the quality and 'perception' of tourism employment, visa facilitation, intra-regional connectivity and the measurement of tourism's impact through the recently launched UNWTO Initiative on Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST).

Participants further recalled that much of the growth of the sector comes from the high level of support at policy level it receives from many countries in the region as a tool to diversify oil-based economies.

H.E. Mohammed Khamis Al Muhairi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, UAE, said that tourism has proven to be one of the main pillars of economic and social development in various countries. He pointed out that the MENA region has strong potential to become one of the world's leading tourist destinations due to its extensive tourism attractions. He added that the region's countries are at the threshold of a new phase of tourism growth which requires greater cooperation to ensure the maximization of opportunities offered by this sector. He also noted the need to consolidate partnerships at the government and private levels to overcome obstacles to their efforts to enhance the competitiveness of their respective tourism sectors and make the most of tourism's impact on their growth and development.

Mr Al Muhairi further stated that "tourism is a top priority under the development policies of the UAE, revealing that the sector contributes 12.1% to the national GDP and accounts for around 10.4% of the domestic labor market". "Investments to the sector exceeded AED 26 billion in 2016, a year which saw the number of visitors to the UAE reaching 24.8 million with total spend of about AED 110 billion", he added

Commending the UNWTO/ ATM Ministerial Forum for providing an important platform for discussing the best ways to enhance the contributions of tourism to the development objectives of the UAE and other countries in the region he emphasized how the forum reflects the UAE's keenness to support the global efforts to make tourism one of the pillars of sustainable development.

"Despite all external shocks, the Middle East and North Africa tell one of tourism's biggest success stories. A story that brings an immense opportunity to make tourism a pillar of economic diversification, job

creation and sustainable development in this region” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

“Today’s meeting is an opportunity to identify the priorities of tourism policy for the MENA destinations, strengthen regional cooperation and public-private partnerships that prepare the region to welcome the 195 million international tourist arrivals - almost triple the present volume of 72 million – forecasted by UNWTO for 2030. ” he added.

Simon Press, Senior Exhibition Director, ATM, said: “The Middle East is developing at an extraordinary pace as countries diversify from a dependence on hydrocarbon receipts. As such it is vital leaders in the region continue to find new ways of capitalising on tourism growth built on sustainability.

“The UNWTO & ATM Ministerial Forum provided an effective platform for stakeholders across the industry spectrum to identify the opportunities, as well as the challenges, that currently prevail throughout the region.”

The Middle East received 53.6 million international tourist arrivals in 2016. Arrivals decreased an estimated 4% with very mixed results among the region’s destinations. International tourist arrivals to North Africa grew by 3% to 18.6 million.

Madrid, Spain, 26 April 2017
PR No. 17051

UNWTO Commission for Africa analyses the potential of Chinese tourism in the continent

The capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, has recently hosted the 59th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Africa. Held between 18-21 April, the Commission included a High-level Meeting on Chinese Outbound Tourism to Africa, where regional representatives debated the potential that the sector brings to the continent.

Attended by 21 tourism Ministers from the African continent, the UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa has become the best platform to discuss tourism trends in the continent and the potential that Chinese tourism can induce at regional level. The attendees also included Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Entertainment of Jamaica and Hongtao Wei, Vice Chairman of the China National Tourism Administration

The 59th edition of the Commission was complemented by a key interactive session on the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development which is being celebrated worldwide through 2017.

“We all come out of Africa, and went on to inhabit the world, making Africa the first source market in history. Africa is the future and Ethiopia is the soul and heart of Africa” said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai, opening the event. UNWTO Secretary-General received a Recognition

Award from H.E. Mr. Muktar Kedir, Minister of Good Governance of Ethiopia to highlight his legacy to promote tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability.

During his intervention, Mr. Muktar Kedir, described his country 'as a unique land where the earliest ancestors of human beings first walks upright, we honestly expect Ethiopia to be one of the prime choices of tourists in the near future that makes them feel safe and enjoy their stay in this yet un explored land', he said.

The Commission served to motivate African Member States to undersign the African Charter on Sustainable and Responsible Tourism as well supporting the African Caravan on Sustainable and Responsible Tourism led by Morocco through activities to be organized and celebrated during the campaign of the International Year.

China has become a major investor in the African continent, contributing to infrastructure development and reshaping the economic landscape, and is the world's largest outbound market since 2012 after recording double digit growth in expenditure every year since 2004. The meeting witnessed a high level of participation not only from African governments but also private sector stakeholders who discussed the dynamics of the Chinese outbound market together with ways to provide guidance for policies and strategies to African Member States, Chinese stakeholders and African businesses.

The event was a combination of keynote presentations from UNWTO, IVY Alliance Tourism Consulting, AVIAREPS and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), interactive panels and roundtable discussions.

The Commission was informed that the 60th CAF will be hosted in Chengdu China within the framework of the 22nd Session of the General Assembly, to be held in September 2017. In addition, members of the Commission unanimously welcomed Nigeria's expression of interest to host the 61st CAF to be held in 2018.

Madrid, Spain, 28 April 2017
PR No. 17052

Tourism stakeholders gather to support the development of the Western Silk Road

The city of Alexandroupoli, in Greece, has hosted the 1st International UNWTO Western Silk Road Workshop held on 26-27 April 2017. The event was jointly organized by UNWTO, the Ministry of Tourism of Greece and the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. The workshop is the first practical step of an initiative, developed by UNWTO in cooperation with the European Commission as part of the 'Enhancing the Understanding of European Tourism' Project.

The Western Silk Road Tourism Development Initiative aims to revive and redefine Silk Road heritage located throughout the European or Western section of the historic Silk Road routes. By involving many different partners throughout Europe, this novel initiative aims to strengthen and diversify the tourism offer of Western Silk Road destinations as well as enhance regional cooperation and cross-border partnerships.

Three panels integrated the Workshop that focused on the challenges and opportunities to develop the Western Silk Road as a trans-national tourism route, on the marketing potential of the Route, and on the practical steps needed to be taken in order to ensure the project's long-term success and viability. As part of the discussions, a Western Silk Road Work Group has been established in charge of guaranteeing a coordinated approach.

As expressed by UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, "in present times, and building upon a natural and cultural wealth spanning thousands of years, we are in a position to reject harmful global tendencies and revive a route capable of transforming the way we think about and relate to travel. I can think of no better place to host an event focused on European Silk Road heritage than Greece – rightly considered one of the cradles of Humanity".

Tourism unites people and nations. It promotes stability, peace and growth. It builds bridges of cooperation and opens-up roads to prosperity. Thus, we are pleased to support the organization of the first international workshop, as part of this excellent Western Silk Road initiative," mentioned the Minister of Tourism of Greece, Elena Kountoura, at the Opening of the Workshop. "."

Attended by the Governor of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, the Mayor of Alexandroupoli and the Secretary-General of the Greek National Tourism Organization, the Workshop counted upon excellent feedback from a wide range of international stakeholders from the tourism sector and beyond, including tour operators, universities, cultural route representatives and stakeholders from the creative arts, such as the Silk Road Folklore Dance Festival and the Silk Road Film Festival.

Important input was also contributed by UNWTO Affiliate Members, TripAdvisor, Destination Makers, the Fundación Turismo Valencia, the World Federation of Tourist Guides Association (WFTGA), the Greek Guiding Association and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Iraq, that addressed the potential of cultural and religious tourism.

Aegean Airlines, who shared its actions in promoting route development and connectivity across the Silk Road, the Chamber of Evros and the Tsiakiris Silkhouse supported the event.

The conclusions of the Workshop will be further concretized at the 2nd International Western Silk Road Workshop, which will take place in Bulgaria at the end of June 2017.

The 3th UNWTO International Congress on Ethics presents the Recommendations on the Responsible Use of Ratings and Reviews

Tourism stakeholders have convened in Krakow, Poland, in the 3th World Tourism Organization International Congress on Ethics to underline the need to continue advancing the ethical framework of the sector. The event, which was conducted on 26-28 April, is one of the pillars of the 'Enhancing the Understanding of European Tourism' Project, implemented by UNWTO in cooperation with the European Commission.

The Krakow Conference has served to present the UNWTO Recommendations on the Responsible Use of Ratings and Reviews on digital platforms. The guidelines were developed by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) with the collaboration of TripAdvisor, Minube and Yelp.

"Online ratings and reviews are now playing a major role in tourism. The purpose of these new recommendations by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics is to ensure that all actors are playing fair and transparent." Said Pascal Lamy, Chair of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics.

"The UNWTO Recommendations on the responsible use of ratings and reviews on digital platforms are a groundbreaking work resulting from a strong partnership and engagement of TripAdvisor, Minube and Yelp. We know that ratings and reviews are today critical for consumer decisions and UNWTO and the World Committee on Tourism Ethics could not have advanced this important work without them," said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

On the same occasion TripAdvisor has signed the Private Sector Commitment to the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. In the last years, TripAdvisor has become the largest site of travel-related content with more than 500 million of traveler reviews. The incorporation of TripAdvisor to the signatories of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism enhances the potential of this non-binding document which is the major guidance global text on responsible tourism.

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) is a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide key-players in tourism development. Addressed to governments, the travel industry, communities and tourists alike, it aims to help maximize the sector's benefits while minimizing its potentially negative impact on the environment, cultural heritage and societies across the globe.

Adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization, its acknowledgement by the United Nations two years later expressly encouraged UNWTO to promote the effective follow-up of its

provisions. Although not legally binding at this stage, the Code features a voluntary implementation mechanism through its recognition of the role of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE), to which stakeholders may refer matters concerning the application and interpretation of the document.

Since 2011 a total of 513 companies and associations from 69 countries have adhered to the Private Sector Commitment to the Code, pledging to promote and implement its principles and report the actions taken in that respect to UNWTO on a regular basis.

Madrid, Spain, 5 May 2017
PR No. 17055

UNWTO Secretary-General thanks outgoing WTTC President for strong partnership

UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, has expressed his sincere appreciation to David Scowsill, President and CEO of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) for the strong partnership between both organizations as he announced his departure after six years at the helm of WTTC.

Over the last six years, UNWTO and WTTC have created a strong partnership, bringing public and private sector together to advance the tourism sector and addressing its most pressing priorities.

UNWTO and WTTC Open Letter on Travel and Tourism Initiative launched in 2011 garnered the support of over 80 Heads of State and Government from around the world. With this initiative, UNWTO and WTTC aim to promote the importance of the tourism sector in socio-economic inclusive development at the highest level.

“I could not have asked for a better partner. It has been a privilege to work alongside David to mainstream our sector in the global agenda and ensure public and private sector do work together for a better future” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

“During his time at WTTC, David has showed unparalleled leadership and vision, championing public/private sector collaboration and promoting the sustainable growth of our sector. As founder and Chairman of the Global Travel Association Coalition (GTAC), an initiative to ensure the sector can speak with “One Voice” on the key issues such as safe and seamless travel or sustainability, David has united the sector like never before” he added.

Mr Scowsill future plans include joining boards of companies around the world and providing strategic advice to governments.

Madrid, Spain, 5 May 2017
PR No. 17056

UNWTO releases 2nd Global Report on LGBT Tourism

The UNWTO 2nd Global Report on LGBT Tourism was launched at the Annual Convention of the International Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Association (IGLTA) taking place on 4-6 May in Florida. The report, developed in cooperation with IGLTA, underlines the potential of this segment and how to effectively maximize its value.

Following the success of the first edition, published in 2012, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA), a UNWTO Affiliate Member, released today the second edition of the UNWTO Global Report on LGBT Tourism.

The report offers an extensive analysis of the LGBT traveler's profile, providing useful guidance for tourism stakeholders, and destinations in particular, interested in attracting this segment. By means of introduction, the publication includes an overview of the highlights and recent global trends of LGBT tourism, along with a review of the current state of LGBT rights around the world.

"In the last years, LGBT tourism has experienced continued growth, being today widely recognized as an important and promising segment of tourism worldwide. This segment can be a powerful vehicle for economic development, social inclusion and the competitiveness of tourism destinations," said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

The report provides a set of recommendations to tourism stakeholders interested in attracting LGBT Tourism and maximizing the benefits associated with this segment. The diversity and complexity inherent to the LGBT consumer is explored, providing a set of recommendations to tourism stakeholders to better understand it. The publication was enriched by a comprehensive recompilation of case studies from public and private sector.

Madrid, Spain, 10 May 2017
PR No. 17057

UNWTO names President of Costa Rica as Special Ambassador of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

As part of the observance of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), which is leading the campaign, has named Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera as Special Ambassador of this important global

action. The initiatives developed by Costa Rica in the field of sustainable tourism as well as its international positioning and momentum in this field are some of the factors behind the designation.

Traditionally considered an example of environmental commitment, Costa Rica is home to 5% of the world's biodiversity. In addition, more than 25% of the country's land area is classified as protected, and the country is already being powered 100% with renewable energy. One of the most outstanding initiatives carried out by Costa Rica has been the creation of the Certification for Tourism Sustainability. The programme, designed by the Costa Rican Tourism Institute, categorizes and differentiates tourism companies based on their environmental commitment.

"This recognition for Costa Rica bears witness to our emphasis on this non-smokestack industry. It also allows us to strengthen our drive to encourage more women to lead sustainable tourism projects for their economic empowerment," said Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

"The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development is a unique opportunity to promote common action, but also to underline efforts in this field; and Costa Rica's contribution to global sustainability is one of the best examples to follow. We are very grateful to President Solís for his support and leadership in advancing tourism as a tool for sustainable development," explained UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development marks an important milestone in the 2030 Agenda and in the progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in which the tourism sector appears as a key tool. The figure of Special Ambassadors is aimed at providing a global focus to the International Year, as well as to highlight the commitment of leaders and prominent personalities in the development of sustainable practices in the tourism sector.

The list of Special Ambassadors consists of:

- Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa
- Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia
- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia
- Mai bint Mohammed Al-Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities
- Simeon II of Bulgaria
- Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman of the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization
- Huayong Ge, CEO of UnionPay
- Michael Frenzel, President of the Federal Association of the German Tourism Industry

Madrid, Spain, 09 May 2017
PR No. 17058

The Philippines will host the 6th UNWTO Conference on Tourism Statistics

Policy leaders, statisticians, academicians and private sector will convene in Manila, The Philippines, next June 2017 (21-24), to discuss new methodologies to measure the full impacts of tourism. The 6th edition of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) International Conference on Statistics, an official event of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017, will address the topic of 'Measuring Sustainable Tourism'.

Supported by the United Nations Statistics Division, the UNWTO initiative 'Towards a Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism' (MST) underlines the need to measure the full effects of the tourism sector. The UNWTO International Conference to be held in Manila will serve as a platform to discuss the first draft of the MST framework and its future implementation.

The Philippines has become a reference in the region with regard to tourism measurement and a role model in the development of effective inter-institutional collaboration to develop tourism statistics. The commitment of the country, shown in the development of the Tourism Satellite Account framework, explains the decision to host the discussion on the MST initiative.

A Ministerial Roundtable will inaugurate the Conference in order to align efforts to advocate among governments the relevance of integrated and reliable data to manage and promote a more sustainable tourism sector. Afterwards, a Panel of Statistical Institutes will provide the opportunity to share experiences and practices implemented at global, regional and national level.

Other technical sessions will focus on understanding data demands, the link between the economic, the environmental and the social dimensions of sustainable tourism, including job creation, sub-national measurement, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators, and data sources including big data.

Besides policy leaders, statistical experts and private sector, representatives from international organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and Eurostat will also contribute to the discussions.

The UNWTO High Level Task Force Meeting on Tourism and Security convenes in Madrid

The integration of national security with tourism security, crisis communication and travel advisories were some of the key issues discussed at the 1st Meeting of the High Level Task Force on Tourism and Security, organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) today in Madrid. The event took place ahead of the 105th UNWTO Executive Council meeting to be held in Madrid, home of the UNWTO Headquarters, on 11 and 12 May.

The Task Force Meeting gathered representatives from UNWTO Member States, UN organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and private sector entities such as the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the Federal Association of the German Tourism Industry (BTW) and the Association of British Travel Agencies (ABTA).

“The Task Force was established by the UNWTO Executive Council to help us reinforce our action and cooperation towards safer, more secure and yet more seamless travel,” recalled UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, opening the meeting.

Actions such as joint police work between Spain and source markets for specific events or times of the year, tourism training for security forces in Jamaica, the tourism and security task force in Kenya, and the experience of the tourism police in Thailand were some of the cases shared during the meeting by UNWTO Member States.

Also on the table were issues of public and private sector cooperation in operational crisis management and communications, and the tourism sector addressing possible tightening of security measures.

The work of the Task Force will focus on five key issues: 1) the integration between tourism and security; 2) support to the sector in setting crisis management plans and protocols; 3) travel advisories; 4) safe, secure and seamless travel including visa facilitation; and 5) crisis communications.

These areas will be addressed by specific working groups tasked with developing recommendations and guidelines to be presented at the UNWTO General Assembly.

UNWTO welcomes Hilton as Official Partner of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is proud to announce that Hilton has signed on as an official partner of the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The announcement comes ahead of the UNWTO's launch of the 'Travel.Enjoy.Respect' campaign.

The United Nations 70th General Assembly has designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The initiative aims to support a change in policies, business practices and consumer behavior towards a more sustainable tourism sector.

"The involvement of the private sector is essential in amplifying the impact of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development," said Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary General. "Hilton is a global hospitality leader whose focus on sustainable travel supports our broad goals of tourism that spurs dialogue, fosters mutual understanding, and supports building a culture of peace."

"Our founder Conrad Hilton often spoke of "world peace through international trade and travel, which remains just as important and core to our business today," said Katie Fallon, Senior Vice President and Global Head of Corporate Affairs, Hilton. "We are pleased to join with the UNWTO and its partners to communicate the benefits of sustainable travel for the communities where we work and live."

Hilton's Travel with Purpose strategy identifies innovative solutions that leverage its global footprint to provide positive impact in three key focus areas; creating opportunities for people, strengthening communities, and preserving the environment. By mobilizing its nearly 5,000 hotels in 103 countries and territories, Hilton continues to operate in responsible and sustainable ways.

The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development promotes tourism's role in the following five key areas: (1) inclusive and sustainable economic growth; (2) social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction; (3) resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change; (4) cultural values, diversity and heritage; and (5) mutual understanding, peace and security.

About The World Tourism Organization

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide. UNWTO encourages the implementation of the Global

Code of Ethics for Tourism, to maximize tourism's socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts, and is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), geared towards reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide. UNWTO generates market knowledge, promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, fosters tourism education and training, and works to make tourism an effective tool for development through technical assistance projects in over 100 countries around the world. UNWTO's membership includes 157 countries, 6 Associate Members and 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

About Hilton

Hilton (NYSE: HLT) is a leading global hospitality company, with a portfolio of 14 world-class brands comprising nearly 5,000 properties with more than 812,000 rooms in 103 countries and territories. Hilton is dedicated to fulfilling its mission to be the world's most hospitable company by delivering exceptional experiences – every hotel, every guest, every time. The company's portfolio includes Hilton Hotels & Resorts, Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts, Conrad Hotels & Resorts, Canopy by Hilton, Curio Collection by HiltonTM, DoubleTree by Hilton, Tapestry Collection by HiltonTM, Embassy Suites by Hilton, Hilton Garden Inn, Hampton by Hilton, Tru by Hilton, Homewood Suites by Hilton, Home2 Suites by Hilton and Hilton Grand Vacations. The company also manages an award-winning customer loyalty program, Hilton Honors. Hilton Honors members who book directly through preferred Hilton channels have access to instant benefits, including a flexible payment slider that allows members to choose exactly how many Points to combine with money, an exclusive member discount that can't be found anywhere else and free standard Wi-Fi.

Madrid, Spain, 12 May 2017
PR No. 17063

105th UNWTO Executive Council meeting concludes in Madrid

Madrid, Spain, hosted the 105th meeting of the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) between 11 and 12 May. The Meeting focused on current trends and challenges facing the tourism sector and on the three priorities of the Organization - safe, secure and seamless travel; the impact of technology in the tourism sector and sustainability.

The Executive Council, attended by some 250 representatives from 59 countries, focused on these priorities as well as on the UNWTO

programme of work for 2018-2019 and the agenda of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

The 105th session of the UNWTO Executive Council also recommended Zurab Pololikashvili, from Georgia, as the nominee for the post of Secretary-General for the four-year-period starting January 2018. This recommendation will be submitted to the 22nd UNWTO General Assembly for ratification (11-16 September 2017, Chengu, China).

“We predict that 1.8 billion international tourists will travel across borders by 2030. We must ensure that such growth goes hand-in-hand with sustainability. We must embrace the opportunities created by innovation and new technologies. We must continue to make travel safer, but also more seamless and accessible for all. And we must ensure that our sector serves the planet as well as its people” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, opening the meeting.

“UNWTO is a privileged forum where all countries discuss the main challenges facing our sector, share experiences and build common solutions. Tourism is about building bridges” said the Secretary of State of Tourism of Spain, Matilde Asían.

The Chair of the Council, the Minister of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan, Abulfas Garayev, recalled the importance of the declaration by the United Nations General Assembly of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development “This is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the contribution of sustainable tourism to development among public and private sector decision makers and the public, while mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change”, he said.

The 106th and 107th sessions of the UNWTO Executive Council will take place in September 2017 in Chengdu, China in the framework of the 22nd UNWTO General Assembly.

Madrid, Spain, 12 May 2017
PR No. 17064

UNWTO Executive Council recommends Zurab Pololikashvili for Secretary-General for the period 2018-2021

The 105th session of the UNWTO Executive Council, meeting in Madrid, Spain, on 12 May 2017, recommended Zurab Pololikashvili, Ambassador of Georgia in Spain, as a nominee for the post of Secretary-General for the four-year-period starting January 2018.

The candidature of Zurab Pololikashvili was presented by his country, Georgia, in accordance with the UNWTO statutes.

The recommendation of the UNWTO Executive Council will be submitted to the upcoming 22nd UNWTO General Assembly for ratification (11-16 September 2017, Chengdu, China).

2nd UNWTO Report on Gastronomy Tourism: sustainability and gastronomy

A major component of history, tradition and identity, gastronomy has also become a major motivation to visit a destination. According to the 2nd UNWTO Report on Gastronomy Tourism, this tourism segment “offers enormous potential in stimulating local, regional and national economies and enhancing sustainability and inclusion”. The Report was presented in the recent 3rd UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism, held in San Sebastian, Spain in cooperation with the Basque Culinary Center.

Sixteen good practices in Gastronomy Tourism from different countries are showcased in the 2nd UNWTO Report on Gastronomy Tourism, touching on issues such as seasonality, training and innovation, ICT-related initiatives and wine-related itineraries. The publication stresses that in terms of tourist motivations, experiencing gastronomy is now at a similar level to visiting a museum, enjoying music and admiring the architecture of a destination. In this sense, gastronomy tourism has strong potential to improve destination management, promote cultures and contribute to other sectors such as agriculture and food manufacturing.

The commitment of gastronomy tourism towards the principles of sustainability has been one of the conclusions of the Forum held in San Sebastian. This includes areas such as poverty reduction, efficient use of resources, environmental protection and climate change, and the protection of cultural values, heritage and diversity.

The event was attended by around 250 participants from 60 countries and was inaugurated by UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai, Eneko Goia, Mayor of the City of San Sebastian, and the Director of the Basque Culinary Center, Joxe Mari Aizega.

The engagement of the traveller in these principles through his/her gastronomic experience was also underlined throughout the Forum. The need to develop appropriate policy measures and a strong governance framework was highlighted as a major conclusion. This would facilitate not only the commitment of relevant actors, but also the interaction among them, as well as the development of private-public partnerships.

The union between gastronomy and tourism provides therefore a platform to revitalize cultures, to preserve tangible and intangible heritage, to empower communities and to enhance intercultural understanding. These aspects were particularly tackled during the practical experiences included in the Forum, such as a cooking class and farm-to-table dining experiences.

Madrid, Spain, 18 May 2017
PR No. 17066

UNWTO Commission for Asia and the Pacific meets in Bangladesh

In 2016, Asia and the Pacific received 309 million international tourist arrivals, 9% more than in 2015; by 2030 this number is expected to reach 535 million. Over 20 countries gathered in Bangladesh on 16-17 May for the 29th joint meeting of the UNWTO Commissions for Asia and the Pacific and South Asia, to discuss challenges facing the sector in the region, opportunities for sustainable tourism development and the programme of work of UNWTO in Asia for the coming two years.

“With growth comes power, and with power, comes responsibility. With 1.8 billion international tourists foreseen to travel the world by 2030, we could end up with 1.8 billion opportunities or 1.8 billion disasters. These 1.8 billion travellers can and should translate into opportunities for inclusive economic growth, for more and better jobs, opportunities to protect our natural and cultural heritage, to better know and respect each other, to bond people, to distribute wealth and share prosperity,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai, opening the event.

“Tourism can help us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Your presence in Bangladesh will help us to support our tourism sector achieve its potential,” said the Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism of Bangladesh, Rashed Khan Menon.

The meeting recalled the advances of the region in terms of visa facilitation, namely in Indonesia and India, in line with UNWTO’s priority to promote safe, secure and seamless travel. It also reviewed the work of the UNWTO technical committees on tourism competitiveness, sustainability, statistics and Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), and the activities being carried out at national level to celebrate the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

Further items on the agenda included the transformation of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics into an international convention and the creation of national committees on tourism ethics. Fiji was selected to host the 2018 Regional Commissions meeting and India as the proposed host country of the official celebrations of World Tourism Day in 2019.

Marking the International Year, UNWTO announced its support to Bangladesh in implementing capacity building programmes on wildlife and tourism within the UNWTO/Chimelong Initiative. Wildlife is one of the most important tourism assets of Bangladesh.

The joint meeting was preceded by a regional forum on crisis communication in tourism, with a step-by-step review of how to prepare a crisis communication plan and exchange of experiences in managing communication in situations of crisis, and of strategies for recovery.

New Member of Editorial Board

Newly distinguish colleague joined the Editorial Board of Journal of Tourism and Services from March 2017 – Prof. Marjana Merkač Skok, PhD.

Prof. Merkač Skok holds her doctorate at the University of Maribor. She is a full professor of management and organizational behavior. At GEA College Faculty of Entrepreneurship she serves as a Dean. She holds undergraduate and graduate course on Fundamentals of Management, Human Resources and ethical dilemmas, Career management and Intercultural Business Communication. Prof. Merkač Skok has been involved with Faculty since 1996. As a researcher and a university teacher she has operated at other higher education institutions in Slovenia and abroad. She led or participated in numerous research and development projects and published a large number of original scientific papers, monographs and study materials. She has also several contributions as guest speaker at international scientific conferences. Her research work is focused on organizational and human resources, lifelong learning and career. She serves as independent quality evaluator expert for international agencies in higher education sector. She has been mentoring a large number of bachelor and master's thesis and doctoral students. COBISS system shows nearly 400 units.

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- shorter non peer reviewed reviews of existing work or short essays aimed at stimulating debate;
- research notes to allow researchers to present initial findings and reflections or problems concerning fieldwork and research in general;
- industry news.

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Title of the Paper (14pt Times New Roman, Bold, left justified) in English Language

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The length of the paper should not exceed 20 pages, 1800 characters per page, justified. Tables, figures, illustrations and references are excluded from the word count. *Leave 2 blank lines between successive sections and/or subsections.*

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