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Report of the World Tourism Organization on tourism statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2013/235, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on tourism statistics. The report describes the process of developing and completing the compilation guide for *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008* and outlines the main parts of the guide. The report also provides an overview of the work undertaken to implement the recommendations by UNWTO in cooperation with countries and international organizations since its previous report to the Statistical Commission, in 2011 (E/CN.3/2011/26). The Commission is requested to take note of the present report, thereby endorsing the compilation guide for use by Member States.

* E/CN.3/2014/1.



Report of the World Tourism Organization on tourism statistics

I. Introduction

1. When it adopted the *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008* (IRTS 2008) at its thirty-ninth session, in 2008, the Statistical Commission requested the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Statistics Division to develop an implementation programme, including the preparation of a compilation guide and the organization of training workshops, in collaboration with supranational and regional organizations.¹ The two organizations responded to that request and outlined an implementation plan during the fifth UNWTO International Conference on Tourism Statistics, held in Bali, Indonesia, from 30 March to 2 April 2009. Their joint keynote address for the session, on developing national statistical systems of tourism statistics, gave an overview of the new recommendations and the efforts to implement them through statistical capacity-building and the development of a compilation guide for IRTS 2008.

2. UNWTO launched an ambitious statistical capacity-building programme in 2008, with programmes in Eastern Europe (2008-2009) and Southern Africa (2008-2010) supported by the Governments of Austria and South Africa, as the respective regional hubs. For each programme, about 12 UNWTO member countries were invited to participate. The prototype of this regional statistical capacity-building consists of a series of three or four workshops held at intervals of approximately six months and hosted by a country considered to be the most advanced or most determined in terms of the development of tourism statistics. Two more statistical capacity-building programmes were implemented in Asia and the Pacific (2010-2012), supported by the Government of the Philippines and by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and with assistance from Australia and New Zealand, and in countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (2011-2013), supported by the Government of Azerbaijan.

3. In parallel with the statistical capacity-building, UNWTO also started the development of a compilation guide for tourism statistics. The present report contains information about the development process and the content of the guide in sections II and III, respectively, and provides an overview of the UNWTO Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account programme, in section IV. Finally, section V provides the conclusion and the way forward.

II. Development of the IRTS 2008 compilation guide

4. As reported to the Commission in 2011,² the compilation guide was developed mostly during 2011 and was intended to be completed by February 2012. It is fully aligned with IRTS 2008 and contains additional information on certain typical compilation issues, such as setting up the system of tourism statistics, identifying the basic information framework for the international comparability of tourism statistics, and checking consistency in survey data and reconciliation among data

¹ Decision 39/106; see E/CN.3/2008/34.

² See E/CN.3/2011/26.

provided by different sources. The guide is also intended to serve as the basic supporting document for the worldwide implementation of IRTS 2008, and is designed to support the production of a set of basic data and indicators in each country, irrespective of its level of development, thereby contributing to the international comparability of tourism statistics.

5. The IRTS 2008 compilation guide was prepared by international experts and national compilers of tourism statistics. The consultation and drafting process was supported by UNWTO. A worldwide consultation on the full draft guide was held in March and April 2011. Immediately thereafter, in May 2011, the draft guide and the comments received as a result of the worldwide consultation were discussed during an expert group meeting held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with the objective of taking the final decisions on the content of the guide. The Brazil meeting successfully concluded with a detailed report containing amendments to the text of the guide. It was also agreed that the material on employment and supplementary issues (institutional issues, dissemination, quality assurance and metadata) would be drafted in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and the Statistics Division, respectively.

6. The UNWTO Committee on Statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account supervised the development of the guide, discussing its preparation at its 10th and 11th meetings in 2009 and 2010, and in greater detail at its 12th meeting, in January 2011. Owing to the vacancy of the Chief Statistician position at UNWTO at the beginning of 2012, the drafting of the pending material and the holding of the 13th meeting of the Committee were postponed, which effectively caused the postponement of the submission of the guide to the Statistical Commission.

7. The 13th meeting³ of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account was held in July 2013. The completion of the compilation guide was the first item of the agenda, including a tentative timeline for the submission of the guide to the Statistical Commission. The material on employment and supplementary issues was included, and the draft guide was reviewed one last time by Committee members and other national experts in September and November 2013 through a dedicated discussion forum and with the support of the Statistics Division. Comments and revisions were incorporated into a final editorial review in December 2013, with the Committee endorsing the final version of the guide during its 14th meeting, in January 2014.

8. Taking into account the close links between tourism statistics and statistics of international trade in services, UNWTO and the Statistics Division ensured that the text of the IRTS 2008 compilation guide was kept in line with the compilers' guide for the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services*, in instances where it concerns the travel component of the resident/non-resident trade in services.

III. Content of the IRTS 2008 compilation guide

9. The IRTS 2008 compilation guide includes comments and explanations on the various concepts, definitions, classifications and indicators introduced and used in IRTS 2008; orientation regarding the issues behind the recommendations; guidance

³ For details of the meeting see <http://statistics.unwto.org/en/event/thirteenth-meeting-committee-statistics-and-tourism-satellite-account>.

on how to compile the recommended variables and aggregates; and examples of how countries have solved some of the challenges here mentioned in implementing the recommendations. Some of their solutions can be considered best practices; others, while geared to particular national circumstances, may nevertheless be interesting as illustrations of how countries can overcome obstacles encountered in the compilation process. The full text of the compilation guide is provided to the Commission as a background document.

10. The compilation guide is structured to accompany each chapter of IRTS 2008. Each chapter of the guide provides extensive explanations and country examples of typical compilation issues, as follows:

(a) Chapter 1 discusses the system of tourism statistics and how it is to be designed. The system of tourism statistics should be understood as that part of the national statistical system that provides reliable, consistent and appropriate statistical information on the socioeconomic aspects of tourism, integrated with economic and social statistics systems in other fields and at different territorial levels: national (or federal where appropriate), subnational and international. In that way, the system of tourism statistics describes the basic information framework for promoting the international comparability of tourism statistics and improving the design and monitoring of tourism policies. This chapter also looks at the institutional arrangements involved in setting up a system of tourism statistics;

(b) Chapter 2 provides a general overview of the demand-oriented conceptual framework of IRTS 2008 and refers to the related observation issues. The activities carried out by visitors in this framework are focused first of all on the acquisition of goods or services on the market, but also on non-market goods and services either provided to visitors by government or non-profit institutions or acquired by visitors themselves (for example, accommodation services provided by vacation homes). These activities represent the actions and behaviours of people in preparation for and during a trip in their capacity as consumers;

(c) Chapter 3 describes issues that arise in measuring visitor flows and observing their characteristics, and the processes that countries can follow in doing so. This chapter covers the characterization of all types of visitors (of interest for tourism analysis) and the measurement of flows of international travellers (of interest for balance of payments);

(d) Chapter 4 focuses on tourism expenditure, describing the issues that arise in measuring such expenditure and some of the measurement instruments available. One of the key economic implications of tourism relates to visitor expenditure for and during tourism trips. This chapter describes the scope and various categories of expenditure associated with movements of non-resident visitors to the country of reference (inbound tourism) and movements of resident visitors within and outside the country of reference (domestic tourism and outbound tourism, respectively);

(e) Chapter 5 discusses the international classifications used in tourism statistics and the issues involved in defining and using them, particularly in respect of products and activities;

(f) Chapter 6 deals with the measurement of tourism supply. Particular focus is placed on the accommodation industry. In addition, there is some discussion relating to food and beverage service providers, transport service providers, travel

and reservation agencies, the meetings industry and the production and trade of handicrafts;

(g) Chapter 7 provides an overview of measuring employment in the tourism industries;

(h) Chapter 8 describes a number of supplementary topics, such as the dissemination of data and metadata, quality management and the use of information technology.

11. Additional information on compilation issues is provided in seven annexes:

(a) Annex 1: a set of questions proposed for inclusion in country questionnaires to measure flows and expenditure associated with inbound tourism;

(b) Annex 2: a list of consumption products grouped by purpose, according to their categorization as internationally comparable tourism characteristic products;

(c) Annex 3: a list of tourism characteristic activities (tourism industries) and their grouping by main categories according to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Rev.4, and explanatory notes;

(d) Annex 4: a list of tourism characteristic products and their grouping by main categories according to the Central Product Classification (CPC), Version 2, and explanatory notes;

(e) Annex 5: tourism expenditure vs. tourism consumption: explanation and illustration of differences between the two concepts;

(f) Annex 6: statistical vocabulary;

(g) Annex 7: coherence and consistency in tourism statistics: an overview. This annex provides guidance on two different but related issues not specifically addressed in IRTS 2008: checking consistency in data used for tourism statistics (principally those coming from surveys and administrative procedures) and reconciling data derived from different sources.

IV. UNWTO Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account programme

12. UNWTO supports the global statistics on tourism through its Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account programme, and is recognized as the appropriate organization for the collection, harmonization and dissemination of tourism statistics. UNWTO is committed to making tourism statistics relevant and internationally comparable with a view to furthering knowledge of the sector, monitoring progress, evaluating impact, promoting results-focused management and highlighting strategic issues for policy objectives. It seeks to do this by advancing the methodology of measuring tourism and expanding its analytical potential, developing practical compilation guidance and strengthening the statistical capacity of countries to produce tourism statistics.

13. UNWTO also collects data according to IRTS 2008 from all its Member States worldwide and maintains these in a regularly updated database. On the basis of the data, UNWTO annually publishes the *Compendium of Tourism Statistics*, which provides data on inbound, outbound and domestic tourism, as well as on the number

and types of tourism industries, the number of employees by tourism industries, and macroeconomic indicators related to tourism. The *Compendium* is complemented by the *Yearbook of Tourism Statistics*, which provides data, by country of origin, on arrivals and overnight stays related to inbound tourism.

14. As part of its overall capacity development strategy, UNWTO organized a train-the-trainers workshop early in 2013, which created a pool of trainers able to provide a high-quality, consistent and coherent programme for capacity development in the area of tourism statistics. Drawing from this pool of experts, UNWTO supported a number of training activities in 2013. In addition to the ongoing project in the CIS region, UNWTO provided technical assistance in the collection and analysis of tourism statistics to the 14 States members of the Regional Tourism Organization of Southern Africa. Furthermore, UNWTO not only organized its own training workshops, but also supported capacity-building activities of other international organizations, notably the events organized by the Statistics Division and others in the Caribbean and in Asia. Finally, for the specific purpose of advancing the measurement of tourism employment, UNWTO organized an international seminar in Malaga, Spain, towards the end of 2013.

15. Furthermore, as part of its work programme for 2014, UNWTO plans to assist Member States in improving their statistical capacity by giving advice, organizing seminars on tourism statistics and supporting seminars organized by others. In particular, UNWTO plans to organize a regional capacity-building series for North African French-speaking countries. In addition, UNWTO will explore options with respect to organizing a regional capacity-building programme for Portuguese-speaking countries.

16. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was a milestone in the process of mainstreaming sustainable development. The outcome document, entitled “The future we want” (General Assembly resolution [66/288](#), annex), highlights many initiatives in a broad range of policy domains. Among others, it describes the significant role that sustainable tourism can play for sustainable development and the green economy. Consequently, sustainable tourism is high on the priority list of UNWTO, which continues its engagement in this area through discussions and processes related to the post-2015 development agenda. UNWTO proposed that the measurement of sustainable tourism be one of the main topics of the International Statistical Institute World Statistics Congress to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2015.

V. Conclusion and the way forward

17. UNWTO and the Statistics Division responded to the request made by the Statistical Commission in 2008 for the development of an implementation programme for tourism statistics, including the preparation of a compilation guide. Regional capacity-building programmes for tourism statistics were planned and implemented in various regions of the world. The IRTS 2008 compilation guide was prepared in an inclusive process involving experts of developed and developing countries and was finalized in 2013. The full text of the guide is provided to the Commission as a background document.

18. UNWTO, in close collaboration with the Statistics Division and other partners, will continue the implementation of IRTS 2008 as well as of the Tourism Satellite Account in the coming years. The supporting training material, workshops and technical assistance for countries will be updated in the light of the new information contained in the compilation guide. The guide itself will be made available as a publication and as a web application that will enable the addition of new content (such as best practice examples, further clarifications and country information) in collaboration with countries and international organizations.

19. The Commission is invited to take note of the present report, thereby endorsing the compilation guide for use by its member States.
