

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON TOURISM STATISTICS

Jointly organized by UN Statistics Division and UNWTO Department of Statistics and Economic Measurement of Tourism

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OPENING STATEMENT

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Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this International Workshop on Tourism Statistics. I would like to thank Mr. Francesco Frangialli, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, for the excellent cooperation we have received in co-organizing this important event. I also would like to thank all participants and experts from the national tourism administrations, national statistical offices, other national agencies and international organizations for accepting our invitation to have a dialogue on the advancement of tourism statistics.

In 1991, significant progress was made in shaping the international standards on the compilation of tourism statistics at the International Conference on International Travel and Tourism Statistics held in Ottawa. Based on the outcome of the conference, a methodological manual titled '*Recommendations on Tourism Statistics*' was prepared. It was subsequently approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 27th session of in March 1993 and issued in 1994 as a joint UN and UNWTO publication. Those recommendations were the foundation for the standardization of tourism statistics worldwide for many years.

The need for measuring the economic impact of tourism and for further refinement of the recommendations for compilation of basic tourism statistics led to the Enzo Paci World Conference on the Measurement of the Economic Impact of Tourism in

Nice in 1999. The follow-up work of UNWTO, OECD, Eurostat and UNSD resulted in establishing a common conceptual framework for the development of the tourism satellite accounts. That framework was adopted by the Statistical Commission at 31st session in 2000 as *Tourism Satellite Accounts: Recommended Methodological Framework*.

Compilation of tourism statistics is not an easy task both at the national as well as international levels. At the national level, there is sometimes confusion on the division of labour between the national statistical office, the tourism authority and the boarder control. The data collection processes, especially with respect to the tourist expenditure, are complicated and require intense efforts to ensure their quality. Tourism data are also not well incorporated in the complex system of official statistics, and do not get the full attention they deserve.

At the international level, information are often dispersed in various agencies and collected in response to specific policy needs of different players resulting in indicators which might not be consistent. In view of upcoming revision of the tourism statistics, the Statistical Commission has asked UNSD to facilitate the exchange of views between the involved international organizations by creating an appropriate coordination mechanism. Such mechanism was created in 2004 in the form of Interagency Coordination Group on Tourism Statistics. The Group has done useful work including the identification of a number of issues that require revision. Our task now is to ensure that national tourism administrations and national statistical offices are fully consulted and that their views on what and how to revise the international recommendations are clearly expressed. In this context the electronic forum created by the UNWTO is a very good initiative and I would encourage countries to use it.

The current workshop is a major and unique event in the context of a worldwide consultation process. It brings together representatives from different institutions and provides a unique opportunity to exchange views and to discuss a number of issues ranging from the methodological foundations of tourism statistics to data

sources, data compilation methods, quality assurance practices and data dissemination policies. To facilitate integration of national statistical systems, an agenda item has been devoted to discuss the forming a strategic alliance between various agencies having responsibility in this area such as national tourism administrations and national statistical offices. This alliance and cooperation is extremely important and we look forward to sharing of experiences on how to foster this alliance.

The draft revised *Recommendations* are planned to be submitted to the 39th session of the Commission (March 2008) for approval. At the same session, the Commission is expected to have before it the revised text of *Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework*. This implies that both sets of recommendations should be revised simultaneously and in a harmonized manner. This will ensure that the improved basic tourism statistics will not only better serve the needs of policy makers both in governments and industry but, at the same time, provide a solid foundation for the compilation of the Tourism Satellite Accounts by the interested countries.

The results of the workshop will be a very important input to the revision work. In this connection, UNSD will assist the community of tourism statisticians in general and the UNWTO in particular in bringing the revision process to the satisfactory conclusion. I am pleased to announce that UNSD is ready to organize, jointly with the UNWTO, an Expert Group meeting on tourism statistics and held it in mid 2007 in New York. This Expert Group will review the draft revised recommendations on tourism statistics and endorse their submission to the UN Statistical Commission. After the adoption of the recommendations UNSD will cooperate with UNWTO to ensure their successful implementation.

In closing, I would like to wish you success in the deliberations during the next four days and I am looking forward to the outcomes of this meeting.

Thank you.