A. Introduction

1.1. The present Compilation Guide is focused on the setting up of a national System of Tourism Statistics (STS). Tourism statistics cover data on visitors’ activities (such as arrivals and departures, overnight stays, expenditures and the main purpose of the trip) associated with the different forms of tourism (inbound, domestic and outbound) and on activity, infrastructure and employment related to the tourism industries. Box I.1 sets out the international Classification of Statistical Activities, which categorizes tourism statistics as part of any National Statistical System (NSS).

1.2. The STS should be understood as constituting part of the NSS that provides reliable, consistent and appropriate statistical information on the socioeconomic aspects of tourism, and which is integrated with economic and social statistics systems in other fields and at different territorial levels: national (or federal, where appropriate), subnational and international.

1.3. The STS, which should be viewed as the basic framework for coordinating and integrating statistical information on tourism, incorporates concepts, definitions, classifications, data, indicators, and aggregated and tabulated results, so as to provide an exhaustive description of all the dimensions of the tourism phenomenon (physical, social, economic, etc.) and internationally comparable measurements of its economic contribution.

1.4. The development of a national STS is closely linked with the implementation of a Tourism Satellite Account (TSA). A TSA provides the conceptual framework and the organizational structure for integrating many types of tourism statistics with each other and with other types of economic statistics (mainly national accounts and balance of payments data). In order for the TSA to serve as such an integrated framework, the same requirements as those for the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) should apply: tourism statistics should be coherent (i.e., the same concepts, definitions and classifications should apply to all related components) and consistent (i.e., measurements for each component should be commensurable so as to enable then integration within a unique analytical framework).

1.5. This explains why the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 (IRTS 2008) emphasizes the fact that the development of a STS is closely linked to the implementation of the other international recommendations regarding tourism statistics i.e., the Tourism Satellite Account:Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 (TSA: RMF 2008). This linkage ensures the internal consistency of tourism data and their external consistency with the major systems of macroeconomic information, e.g., the national accounts, as well as other systems of information linked to them (see IRTS 2008, paras. 1.34-1.36).

1.6. It should be noted that the Statistical Commission, in its report on the thirty-ninth session affirmed “the role of the System of National Accounts as the integrating framework in economic statistics” and recognized “the importance of increasing the coherence of basic economic statistics for enhancing the quality and analytical value of both basic economic statistics and macroeconomic statistics” (E/2008/24, chap. II.B, decision 39/105, para. (c)).
1.7. The national STS as part of a National System of Statistics should be viewed as the basic framework for coordinating and integrating statistical information on tourism as produced by all types of stakeholders. For further information, please refer to "The System of Tourism Statistics: basic references", sect. A.

1.8. The STS is defined as a set of interconnected statistical components comprising:

- Statistical sources
- Data derived from those sources: statistics drawn from surveys, administrative records, statistics of a more synthetic nature, such as those integrated into and derived from the TSA, and the related data derived from adjacent statistical areas, like the balance of payments and the national accounts
- Specific tools, methodological references and instruments used at certain stages of the process (concepts, definitions, classifications, databases, etc.)
- Instrumental and organizational resources used in the statistical processes

1.9. The STS encompasses, in particular, the technical aspects of field operations, the creation of the statistical infrastructure, the elaboration of the results, and the integration of the data into a genuine system of information.

1.10. The recommendations set out in IRTS 2008 for national STSs will facilitate international comparisons as well as integration within each country’s NSS (see "The System of Tourism Statistics: basic references", sect. B).
1.11. Countries might develop, in addition to the basic data covered in IRTS 2008, supplementary data and indicators relevant for key tourism stakeholders, derived from official and nonofficial sources, and consistent with the concepts and classifications presented in IRTS 2008 and used here. Examples in this regard include information on tourism statistics, so-called tourism products (e.g., sun and beach, cultural tourism), attractions visited, and comparative of prices and taxes on tourism products.

1.12. It should be noted that the National Tourism Administration (NTA) is not the only agency involved with tourism. In many, if not in most countries, the National Statistical Office (NSO), the central bank and migration authorities, among other entities collect, or are a source of, statistics that are a component of a STS. Following the IRTS 2008 recommendation for interinstitutional relations, UNWTO recommends the establishment of a so-called Interinstitutional Platform, which would comprise representatives of all the bodies that are involved in the collection and/or production of statistics relating to tourism (see sect. D below).

1.13. IRTS 2008 requires and encourages a certain level of development of a country’s STS. However, it is recognized that not all countries are currently at a level of development that would allow them to implement these standards immediately. Hence, UNWTO recommends that the standards be implemented in a staged way, starting with the most basic standards and gradually building implementation of the more demanding elements. In the meantime, some countries have to rely on approximate data, as the only tourism-related data available. Such data might include:

- Balance of payments data (from the travel and passenger transport items)
- Data from immigration authorities on inbound visitors based on nationality (even though, for tourism purposes, information should be based on country of residence)
- Data from hotel associations
- Data from transport companies
- Data from commercial accommodation establishments

1.14. Such data can be very useful in the absence of IRTS-recommended data. As there could be a wide variety of such potential data sources, a country’s NTA may decide that such data are sufficient and consequently that there is no need to invest in the development of an STS meeting international standards. However, UNWTO highly recommends that such countries do invest in implementing the standards. Adherence to these standards provides the data with credibility, internal consistency and international comparability and ensures that the data are compatible with, and can serve as an official input to, macroeconomic measures such as the national accounts and the balance of payments. Such compatibility confers on the measurement of tourism greater credibility, which in turn, facilitates advocacy for the importance of tourism and fosters more effective management of a sector that is nested inherently in the economy.