Introduction

At its thirteenth session, held from 26 to 29 February 2008, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 (IRTS 2008) (decision 39/106, para. (b)) and requested that the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) develop a programme to support the implementation of IRTS 2008 (decision 39/106, para. (c)). This programme was to include the preparation of a Compilation Guide for tourism statistics.

Within the United Nations system, the common practice is for the adoption of an international statistical standard or set of international recommendations, such as IRTS 2008, to be followed by:

(a) Development of an implementation programme, consisting of training materials, workshops and technical assistance programmes designed to assist countries in basic collection, compilation and dissemination of the basic data considered in the set of recommendations;

(b) Preparation of a compilation guide whose objectives include the following:

(i) To provide practical recommendations, based on best practices, on how to collect data for the agreed list of variables presented in the international recommendations, including identification of units to be used, sample frames and design, source data, design and implementation of surveys as needed, national adaptations of classifications, and statistical techniques for validation and editing;

(ii) To provide guidance on developing databases, paying particular attention to inclusion of metadata;

(iii) To offer best practices, selected on an ongoing basis and in dynamic relation to the periodic updating of the compilation guide;

(iv) To provide guidance on developing data quality frameworks: a. to assess compliance with concepts underlying the recommendations and b. to assess the scope of countries’ implementation of those recommendations on a regular basis.

The present Compilation Guide is intended to serve as the basic support for the worldwide implementation of IRTS 2008. In this sense, it also provides guidance on how to submit information to UNWTO for inclusion in the most comprehensive international statistical database available on tourism, namely, the Compendium of Tourism Statistics, with the objective of contributing to international comparability and a better understanding of tourism worldwide.

The Compilation Guide discusses new data sources and the application of statistical methods to changing circumstances. As statistical methods evolve over time, the Compilation Guide does not present a prescriptive or definitive approach to compiling tourism statistics. What it does present are the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and the adjustments required to compile data in accordance with IRTS 2008.

The Compilation Guide takes into consideration the existing international standards relevant to IRTS 2008 and is aligned with the recommendations provided by existing compilation guides, such as the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Compilation Guide and the Compilers Guide of the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services.

The general guidelines proposed by UNWTO are intended to promote a configuration of national Systems of Tourism Statistics (STS) that enables:

- Sets of data to be obtained that are accurate and based on recommended principles to support international comparability

- Countries to identify their statistical gaps and guidance to be provided on how to fill them

- Support of the monitoring and analysis of tourism policies

The Compilation Guide includes comments on and explanations of the different concepts introduced and used in IRTS 2008, examination of the issues underlying these recommendations, guidance on how to compile the recommended variables and aggregates, and examples of how certain countries have solved specific problems. Some of the solutions can be considered best practices; others, while geared to particular national circumstances, may nevertheless be of interest as illustrations of how countries can overcome obstacles encountered in the compilation process.

The Compilation Guide, and which provides extensive explanations and country examples of typical compilation issues, is structured similarly to IRTS 2008, as follows:

- Chapter I discusses how the System of Tourism Statistics (STS) has been designed, describing the basic information framework developed to promote the international comparability of tourism statistics, and introduces the importance of institutional arrangements for developing a STS

- Chapter II provides a general overview of the demand-oriented conceptual framework of IRTS 2008, and the key concepts within the context of related observation issues

- Chapter III describes issues that arise in measuring visitor flows and in observing their characteristics, the processes that countries can follow in doing so, and the basic data and indicators that are derived

- Chapter IV focuses on tourism expenditure, describing the measurement issues, the measurement instruments available, and the basic expenditure data and indicators that are derived

- Chapter V discusses the classifications used in tourism statistics, in particular those related to products and activities

- Chapter VI describes the measurement of tourism supply in terms of different forms of accommodation and services briefly discusses tourism supply from transport service providers, food and beverage service providers, and travel and reservation agencies

- Chapter VII focuses on employment and describes the concepts, definitions, basic categories and indicators of employment in the tourism industries from both a labour and an industry statistics perspective

- Chapter VIII covers a number of crosscutting topics which are relevant to the tourism statistics production process and the meeting of user needs, including quality management, the compilation of metadata, data dissemination and institutional factors

Additional information on compilation issues is provided in the four annexes to this publication.
In order to keep the Compilation Guide as accurate as possible and to facilitate its update as new best practices are identified and countries provide the latest information on different statistical issues, is being issued in two different formats:

- As an edocument with hyperlinks to IRTS 2008, other documents, country case studies and complementary material, as deemed appropriate, which will be regularly updated to reflect new experiences considered useful for the statistics community. While the edocument will be available in English only, the links will in some cases direct readers to case studies in other languages and in the United Nations official languages of the wherever possible.

- As a document in PDF format for printing and translation into other languages (except for hyperlinks material case studies and other complementary material), so as to facilitate dissemination to other interested audiences, particularly users of tourism statistics.