tourism on track to hit one billion by end of 2012

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With a record 467 million tourists traveling in the first half of 2012, international tourism remains firmly on track to reach one billion tourists by the end of the year.

Despite concerns over the global economy, international tourism demand continues to show resilience. The number of international tourists worldwide grew by 5% between January and June 2012 compared to the same period of 2011 (22 million more). Although a slight slowdown in growth can be expected for the rest of the year, international arrivals are forecast to exceed one billion by the end of 2012.

“Amid the current economic uncertainty, tourism is one of the few economic sectors in the world growing strongly, driving economic progress in developing and developed countries alike and, most importantly, creating much needed jobs,” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, opening the Global Tourism Economy Forum in Macao.

“As we lead up to the milestone of one billion, we need to ensure that the tourism sector is supported by adequate national policies and that we work to reduce existing barriers to the expansion of the sector, such as complicated visa procedures, increased direct taxation or limited connectivity,” he added.

Asia leads growth

International arrivals were up in all regions between January and June 2012.

Asia and the Pacific (+8%) led growth by region, boosted by the recovery of Japanese inbound and outbound tourism as well as by the continued strong performance of other major source markets throughout the region. Destinations in South Asia and South-East Asia (both +9%) showed some of the best results worldwide. “Although Asia was affected by the economic crisis of 2008-2009 due to its strong linkages with other economies, the region has bounced back quickly and is today a leader in the global economy. This is clearly reflected in its tourism figures,” said Mr. Rifai.

Europe (+4%), the most visited destination in the world, consolidated its record growth of 2011, despite continuing economic volatility in the Eurozone. Results were above the regional average in Central and Eastern Europe (+7%) where many destinations saw double-digit growth, as well as in Western Europe (+5%). By contrast, demand in Southern and Mediterranean Europe (+1%) slowed down, but on top of a very strong 2011, and partly due to the recovery of destinations in North Africa and the Middle East.

The **Americas** (+5%) grew in line with the world average, with Central America (+7%) and South America (+6%) recording the strongest results. In fact, South America has been one of the sub-regions with the fastest tourism growth of recent years. Destinations in North America grew at 4%, a relatively high rate for a mature sub-region, while growth in the Caribbean (+5%) remained buoyant, consolidating 2011 results.

In **Africa** (+7%), the return of tourist flows to Tunisia is reflected in the results of North Africa (+11%). Likewise, the rebound of Egypt is clearly mirrored in the results of the **Middle-East**
(+0.7%), where the conflict in Syria is still preventing stronger growth. Destinations in Sub-Saharan Africa (+6%) continued to show strong results, following the good growth rates of this sub-region in previous years.

Healthy demand from both emerging and advanced economy source markets

In terms of outbound markets, and among the top ten countries by expenditure on travel abroad, growth was significant in China (+30%), the Russian Federation (+15%), USA (+9%), Germany (+6%) and Canada (+6%) . In Japan, an 8% increase in spending on overseas tourism confirms the recovery of this important market. On the other hand, growth was comparatively slow or negative in the UK, Australia, Italy and France.

Note to Editors:

In 2011, international tourist arrivals reached 990 million (revised due to updated data). With an expected growth of 3% to 4% in 2012, this figure is forecast to reach one billion for the first time by December 2012. In 2011, receipts from international tourism, including international passenger transport, (exports from tourism) totalled US$ 1.2 trillion or close to 6% of the world's exports of goods and services. For more information on tourism in 2011 see *UNWTO Tourism Highlights* .

Consultez la source sur Veille info tourisme: Le tourisme international International vers le milliard de touristes fin 2012 selon un communiqué de IOMT