



STATEMENT BY

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on the occasion of

WORLD TOURISM DAY 2019

“Tourism and Jobs: A Better Future for All”

This year’s World Tourism Day theme, ‘Tourism and jobs: A better future for all’, serves to highlight the critical role tourism, and ultimately nature, plays in job creation. Approximately 10 per cent of the jobs generated worldwide are in the tourism industry. But with job growth comes responsibilities.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Not only is tourism an important source of foreign exchange and employment, but it is closely linked to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of many countries, particularly developing countries and Small Island Developing States. To that end, countries training today’s tourism managers and service providers need to consider the challenges faced by both the sector and the planet.

Tourism in natural areas is arguably the most critical economic force backing conservation: few other sectors work at comparable levels. For example, park agencies of at least 20 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity cover 30 per cent or more of their operating costs from visitation fees and concession revenues.

We must however also remember that tourism can have significant negative impacts on the environment. Tourism-associated greenhouse gas emissions were estimated to be around 5 per cent of global emissions in 2005, with transport generating 75 per cent of the overall emissions. In addition, a significant part of plastics found in the oceans can be traced to tourism and other tourism-related chains, including recreational activities, building and construction, and fishing and food production in coastal tourism



destinations. For instance, in the Mediterranean region tourism is responsible for up to 40 per cent of the marine litter - 95 per cent of it plastic - entering the Mediterranean Sea each summer¹.

However, as a strong generator of jobs and business opportunities for local communities, it is important that the tourism sector continues to evolve and grow. Tourism can play a key role in increasing public appreciation of the environment and to spread awareness of environmental problems when it brings people in closer contact with nature.

The more people are exposed to nature the more likely they are to engage in environmentally conscious behaviour and partake in activities such as the conservation and restoration of biodiversity, and the sustainable use of natural resources, that help preserve the environment. And let us not forget the critical importance of engaging youth in nature-related activities. Studies have shown that if we encourage youth to visit national parks, not only will they learn to respect nature, but many of them will return in later years with their families.

But first we need to ensure that we do everything in our power to conserve and sustainably use nature. As former ice hockey star and present UN Environment Patron for the Polar Regions, Viacheslav Fetisov, recently stated, "Looking ahead, the contribution of nature is essential in adapting to climate change and increasing resilience of tourism destinations. In addition, the use of natural solutions to reduce the footprint of our urban life and to improve human health needs to be acknowledged and scaled up."

So, on this World Tourism Day, I invite you to think about how your travel and recreational choices – and if you work in tourism, or plan to, your professional choices as well - can make a difference for people and our planet.

We only have one Earth, let's ensure that we take care of it so that it continues to provide us with the resources we need for living healthy and fulfilling lives in harmony with nature.

¹ According to WWF, www.wwf.org.uk/updates/tourists-cause-almost-40-spike-plastic-entering-mediterranean-sea-each-summer