

THE FUTURE OF MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM
(6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DESTINATION MANAGEMENT)
16-17 APRIL 2012
DJERBA, TUNISIA

Excellency and My Dear Friend Taleb REFAI,
Esteemed Minister and Our Kind Host Elyes FAKHFAKH,
Dear Ministers,
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

I would like to express my pleasure to be with you here, in the 6th International Conference on Destination Management the Future of Mediterranean Tourism organized by the UNWTO and the Government of Tunisia. On behalf of my country and my Government of the Republic of Turkey, please let me greet you with respect.

Mediterranean region has been home to many empires, many civilizations and many great esteemed men through its history. For this reason, the structure of economic activities in this region has been naturally developed and diversified throughout the history.

It is this region's destiny to be a remarkable destination for tourism. As a result, the Mediterranean countries have enough power and experience to deal with the problems of globalization.

Despite the political unrest and natural disasters, we are very happy to end the year of twenty-eleven (2011) with nine hundred eighty million (980 million) tourist arrivals and with four point four percent (4.4%) growth in the world tourism. In twenty-twelve (2012), we are expecting one (1) billion tourists travelling all over the world.

These figures were just a dream until fifty (50) years ago. Now, they show us the importance of tourism as a building stone for the future. Where we stand now gives a mission to all stakeholders of tourism to increase sensitivity especially in sustainability.

In the Mediterranean Region, we still own one third of the world tourism receipts and half of the international tourist arrivals. However, we should first keep up with the changes in order to be able to steer the changing world.

In order to benefit from the returns of tourism, one should learn lessons from previous experiences. One should make the best of the emerging opportunities. In this regard, the key factors are:

- enhancing cooperation between public and private sector,
- raising awareness on tourism
- increase quality of service
- providing visa facilitations
- exploring the emerging markets
- ensuring product diversity.

And most importantly, the basic elements for development of tourism are peace and economical development in the country, in the region and in the world.

Together with that, we shall be more attentive to protect the nature and the history. Tourism shall not cause to the concretion of shores, decrease in green, pollution of our sea and streams.

On the other hand, we shall attach more importance in preserving of the heritage of our history. We need a legal and strong solidarity for our unfairly and illegally “distributed historical artifacts” from Mediterranean region to the museums and collections all over the world during archeological excavations, new museums, restoration works to be returned to the territories where they belong.

While we were realizing that, we shall adopt a fruitful and reliable service of good quality and reasonable, just and acceptable price policy as principles. We shall avoid undervalue the country and the entire tourism quality with extremely low prices.

Esteemed Participants,

Our countries bear similarities and have original structures. This provides us with the opportunity to get sizeable share from global tourism. It also makes us players with the capability to steer the world tourism. Our geography has the power to do so in the future as well, thanks to its nature, sea, history, culture, cuisine and people.

Let me wholeheartedly indicate that Turkey is of the conviction that tourism growth and guaranteeing its future could only be achieved through international cooperation. Within this scope, one of the fundamental cooperation areas that lie ahead is to maintain the sustainability of the economic growth and social transformation, which will be generated by one (1) billion tourists, with rational planning and without making concessions on quality.

Turkey closed twenty-eleven (2011) with nine point eight percent (9.8%) growth, thirty one point four (31.4) million tourists, and ranking sixth (6th) globally in tourist arrivals. This success has been achieved thanks to sustainability, product diversification and quality policies. However, I believe the principal factor in this breakthrough is the deepened cooperation between Mediterranean countries.

We are the people of countries who have been entertaining, heartening and lifting our spirits by the Mediterranean Sea for centuries. Heartfelt efforts have been exerted to move the richness of this sea to the future. I sincerely believe that such efforts are the sources of joy and proud for each and every one of us.

In concluding, I would like to extend my special thanks and deep respects to

- Our Tunisian brothers and sisters for their warm welcome and hospitality,
- My dear friend Excellency Elyes FAKHFAKH,
- Distinguished Secretary-General Taleb Refai
- As well as the able team of UNWTO,
- Lastly to the participants whose presentations shall make the conference a great success.