Executive Council
Ninety-fifth session
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Report of the Secretary-General

Part I: Current situation and activities

(a) International tourism in 2012 and outlook for 2013

I. International tourism in 2012 and outlook for 2013

1. Despite growing global economic volatility, particularly affecting the Eurozone, international tourist arrivals grew by 3.8% in 2012 to reach a historic milestone of over one billion (1.035 billion). Demand held well throughout the year, with a stronger than expected fourth quarter. Emerging economies (+4.1%) regained the lead over advanced economies (+3.6%), with Asia and the Pacific showing the strongest results.

2. By region, Asia and the Pacific (+7%) was the best performer, while by sub-region South-East Asia, North Africa (both at +9%) and Central and Eastern Europe (+8%) topped the ranking. The Americas (+4%) saw an increase of 6 million arrivals, reaching 162 million in 2012. Arrivals grew by 6% in Africa to reach a new record (52 million) due to the rebound in North Africa (+9%) and to the continued growth of sub-Saharan destinations (+5%). Results in the Middle East (-5%) were still on the negative, in spite of the clear recovery in Egypt.

3. Preliminary data on international tourism receipts for 2012, not yet complete for the full year, indicate that the growth in receipts may have been slightly higher than arrivals. Among the top ten tourism destinations, receipts in the first three quarters of 2012 were up significantly in Hong Kong (China) (+16%), the USA (+10%), the UK (+6%) and Germany (+5%). At the same time, a significant number of destinations around the world saw receipts from international tourism increase by 15% or more – Japan (+37%), India and South Africa (both +22%), Sweden and the Republic of Korea (both +19%), Thailand (+18%) and Poland (+16%).

4. As for outbound tourism as measured by international tourism expenditure, data for the full year of 2012 for the top spenders shows that, although the highest growth rates in expenditure abroad among the ten top markets came from emerging economies – China (+41%), which became in 2012 the top spender in travel abroad in the world, and Russia (+32%) – important traditional source markets showed particularly good results. In Europe, and despite economic pressures, expenditure on international tourism by Germany grew by 6%, while the UK (+4%) returned to growth after two flat
years. In the Americas, expenditure by the USA and Canada increased by 6% and 7%, respectively. On the other hand, France (-6%) and Italy (-1%) registered declines in travel expenditure.

II. Outlook for 2013

5. **UNWTO forecasts international tourist arrivals to increase by 3% to 4% in 2013**, much in line with its long-term forecast Tourism Towards 2030: +3.8% a year on average between 2010 and 2020.

6. **By region**, prospects for 2013 are stronger for Asia and the Pacific (+5% to +6%), followed by Africa (+4% to +6%), the Americas (+3% to +4%), Europe (+2% to +3%) and the Middle East (0% to +5%).

7. Considering that the current document was prepared in early April 2013, an update of the above information will be provided to the 95th session of the Executive Council.

III. Actions to be taken by the Executive Council

8. The Executive Council is requested to take note of report of the Secretary-General on the current situation and prospects for international tourism.