

Tourism Vital to Tackling Global Economic Challenges



Ministers of tourism and high-ranking officials meeting at the 93rd session of the UNWTO Executive Council have highlighted the role of tourism in addressing continuing challenges in the world economy, from a slowdown in growth to global unemployment (Madrid, Spain, 12-13 June).

“On this occasion, I would like to underscore the role of tourism as a creator of jobs in today’s difficult situation, especially among younger populations who find themselves unfairly denied access to the labor market,” said His Royal Highness Prince Felipe of Asturias, Spain, opening the 93rd session of the UNWTO Executive Council.

This message was echoed by the Spanish Minister of Industry, Energy and Tourism, José Manuel Soria, who stated that despite the economic circumstances of 2011, tourism still accounted for over 10% of Spanish GDP and was a major generator of employment in the Spanish economy.

“Despite the volatility of the global economy, international tourism continues to be one of the few sectors to grow,” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai. “The economic opportunities of tourism are many and are reaching millions, but there is still so much more our sector can offer if we work together to reduce the barriers which continue to hamper tourism growth.”

Travel facilitation, in particular entry formalities, is chief among these barriers, continued Mr. Rifai, who called on the tourism officials from close to 60 countries attending the Executive Council to work towards removing barriers to travel as a means to stimulate the economy and job creation.

“My message today is simple,” said Mr. Rifai. “Tourism is a sector that can deliver like few others on the goals of economic growth, job creation and fairer development. We just need to put the right policies in place.”

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