

TUNISIAN TOURISM RECOVERY - REVENUES FAR BEHIND



Although the Tunisian tourism recovery that started at the beginning of 2017 is real, the sector's foreign currency earnings remain low to insignificant.

“We are speaking about a recovery in tourism without seeing a similar increase in revenues,” said Chedly Ayari, Governor of the Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT). The Tunisian Hotel Federation (FTH) has just released the performance figures.

The number of overnight stays has increased by 713 000 since the beginning of the year, but this increase is mainly due to the rise in overnight stays by Maghrebi and Tunisian tourists paying in local currency. Foreign currency is only accrued during the months of July and August which coincides with the high point of the summer season, FTH indicated.

This data was confirmed with supporting figures by the Vice-President of FTH, Jaleleddine Henchiri. According to him, Tunisian tourism income has increased by 40% since the beginning of the year, but foreign currency earnings have increased by only 4.4%. This confirms Chedly Ayari's “doubts” - rightly, he does not see the recovery of Tunisian tourism industry having any impact on the country's foreign currency reserves which are still in large part fueled by the resources generated by borrowing from international lenders.

The President of the Tunisian Association for the Fight Against Corruption (ATLCC), Ibrahim Missaoui, puts forward another “thesis”. In statements he made to “Africanmanager”, he denounced “mismanagement and corruption in the Tunisian tourism sector”, claiming “the existence of fraud regarding the country's foreign currency tourism revenue”, since part of these earnings are remaining abroad.

Mr. Missaoui accused some hoteliers and tour operators of taking more than their share without however indicating the precise nature of the corruption or those professionals involved in it.

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