

MOROCCAN TOURISM: MINISTER IDENTIFIES NUMEROUS DEFICIENCIES



While tourism performance figures are on the rise, it will take more to satisfy the Minister of Tourism, Mohamed Sajid. In consultation with the government, Sajid pointed out the important gap between the investments announced by various players in the tourism sector and the projects which have actually been carried out.

Tourism revenues have grown by 5%, the number of visitors has increased by 10%, the number of overnight stays has risen by 15%. **All of the Moroccan tourism sector indicators for the end of August 2017 tend to show that this essential part of the economy is performing well.** They also tend to confirm the country's resilience in relation to North Africa's ongoing tourism crisis.

But this performance is far from being satisfactory for tourism professionals and public authorities.

The Minister of Tourism pointed this out himself at the last government council meeting. In a presentation he made to his administrative colleagues, Mohamed Sajid highlighted the deficiencies which he believes are standing in the way of improved Moroccan tourism performance, deficiencies which he believes to be predominantly in the existing governance and investment models.

These are two axes along which Sajid would like to articulate his own vision for the sector, a vision which would rectify the roadmap for 2020 – established in 2010 – which now seems obsolete.

At the level of governance, Sajid would like to activate the Higher Council for Tourism and the Interministerial Tourism Commission, two administrative bodies which were created on paper, but never put into operation.

The Minister is also considering integrating the objectives of the 15 regional program contracts into his new vision. "Only 44 out of the 1 000 planned projects have been completed since the launch of vision 2020," a source from the Department of Tourism said.

It is in terms of investments that "vision 2020" is most out of step with its own objectives. Of the 177 billion dirhams (15.6 billion euros) envisioned by this roadmap, only 46 billion has been released (4.1 billion euros).

And the fault lies with all of the sector's stakeholders: the State's general budget was only able to mobilize 5 billion dirhams for investment in Moroccan tourism when it was supposed to allocate 32

billion.

The Fund for Economic and Social Development, for its part, has only released 800 million out of the 5 billion planned.

But it is the private sector which is most deficient: 40 billion in investments have been made over the last six years while a commitment to "vision 2020" of 140 billion had been promised. These missing billions will have to be reallocated according to the Minister's new vision.

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