

CORONAVIRUS: A DISASTROUS SUMMER SEASON FOR MOROCCAN TOURISM



Accustomed to being a reference destination, Morocco has faced a complicated year because of COVID. Especially regarding the Moroccan tourism industry. The summer season, which usually sees a large number of vacationers disembark, recorded a decline of 33.2%, or 11.1 billion dirhams (MMDH), at the end of the first six months of this year, according to the Directorate of Studies and Financial Forecasts (DEPF), under the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Administrative Reform.

One of the main consequences of this fall is the drop in reservations in hotels and other tourist accommodations. Marrakech, the symbol of the country and destination number one, is more like a ghost town at the end of the summer. The other regions are similarly deserted by visitors.

"The tourism sector, which experienced a decline in its value-added of 7% in the first quarter of 2020, after an increase of 2.9% a year ago, continues to show significant withdrawals in terms of revenue," the DEPF points out in its economic note of August.

These revenues have accumulated a decline of 71.7% for the second quarter of 2020, a loss of 11.8 MMDH, continues the same source, noting that the number of tourist arrivals has fallen by 63% at the end of June 2020 and that of overnight stays in classified accommodation establishments by 59%.

For the month of June, the number of overnight stays amounted to 68,199, a decline of 97% in one year, says the DEPF, adding that a more favorable trend, although modest, is expected in the coming months, fueled in particular by the recovery of the domestic tourism market.

Indeed, from June 25th, the Moroccan authorities announced, in a second phase of the alleviation of sanitary constraints, the opening of the tourist accommodation activity, conditioned by sanitary measures allowing, in a first stage, the exploitation of only 50% of the accommodation capacities, combined with the resumption of domestic flights in the Kingdom from the same date.

For the year 2020, the withdrawal of the flow of international arrivals is estimated by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) between 60% and 80%, which will lead to a decline in global tourist spending between 800 and 1 trillion dollars, or -60% compared to the previous year.

In Morocco, the estimated impact of this crisis for this year is a 69% drop in tourist arrivals, a 60% drop in foreign exchange earnings and about 50% job losses.

In order to limit the adverse impact of this crisis for the Moroccan tourism sector and to accelerate its recovery, **a program contract was signed on August 3rd for the benefit of the sector, bringing together public and private actors at the national and regional level** in order to recover pre-crisis performance. The said program-contract, covering the period 2020-2022, aims with its 21 measures to give a strong impetus to the sector and to give it a new dynamic to accompany its recovery and transformation, through three major objectives, including preserving the economic fabric and employment, accelerating the recovery phase and laying the foundations for a sustainable transformation for the sector.

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