

EDITORIAL

International Tourism Under the Sign of Records

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According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the total number of arrivals in international tourism in 2015 was **1.184 billion**, an increase of 4.4% over 2014, marking **a new record**. International tourism was last year characterized by a favourable trend, both in advanced economies (+5%), as well as in emerging countries (+4%).

Europe has consolidated its position as the world's most visited region (about 5-% of total international tourists), recording 609 million tourists in 2015 (29 million more than in 2014). The second tourist region by the number of visitors, Asia and Pacific, recorded 277 million tourists in 2015, with an increase with 13 million over the previous year. The most dynamic region in 2014, America, has kept the favourable trend in 2015, being visited by 191 million international tourists (+9 million than previous year). Finally, it should be noted that Middle East surpassed Africa in terms of arrivals in international tourists (54 million, compared to 53 million), as a result of their diametrically opposed evolutions: an increase with 3% of the arrivals in the Middle East, respectively a 3% decline of the number of tourists who visit Africa.

Regarding international tourist demand, China's position is confirmed - the most important outgoing market in terms of expenditures. On the other hand, if traditional outgoing markets, as United States of America and Great Britain, grew up with 9%, respectively 6% more international tourists last year, in contrast, international tourist flows from Germany, Italy and Australia were up with only about 2%. It should also be noted the decline in tourism demand from the Russian Federation and Brazil, an evolution closely related to the economic situation of those countries.

The last barometer report of the UNWTO show that in the **first four months of 2016** the number of **international arrivals reached 348 million tourists**, an increase of 18 million compared to the same period of last year (a growth rate of 5.3%). Since UNWTO estimate about **a half a billion tourist between May and August 2016**, we expect the **7th consecutive year of growth of international tourism**.

It is remarkable the evolution of the **tourism industry in the last 15 years**, with **average annual growth rates of over 4%**, including the overcome of the historical barrier of 1 billion international tourists since 2013. Thus, despite the tragic events of recent months and delicate geopolitical climate, tourism is strengthening its role in the world economy.

This year is marked also by the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Brazil, after the experience of organizing the 2014 FIFA World Cup, returns to the world's attention by another major sporting event that could improve its position in international tourism, even with an unfavourable domestic socio-economic circumstances.

In this context, we subscribe to the opinion of UNWTO specialists, who appreciate the need to encourage tourism, in particular by ensuring facile travel conditions, investments in human resources and ensuring security safety of tourists.

We conclude the short presentation of the current situation in international tourism, reminding that the UNWTO estimate for 2016 an increase of international tourists rate ranges between 3.5-4.5%, a level that responds to long-term projections of 3.8% (for 2010-2020 entire period). By region, the UNWTO experts estimate a growth rate of 4-5% in Asia and Pacific, respectively in America, and also 3.5-4.5% for Europe. Forecasts for Africa and Middle East are uncertain, growth rates being estimated in a range of 2-5%.

Note: this editorial is based on the latest UNWTO statistics and barometer-reports

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