



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message by Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**for the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development**

**February 2017**

In designating 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the United Nations General Assembly noted “the importance of international tourism in fostering better understanding among peoples everywhere, in leading to a greater awareness of the rich heritage of various civilizations, thereby contributing to the strengthening of peace in the world”.

Travel helps opens the doors to intercultural exchange and dialogue. With over 1.2 billion people now crossing international borders each year, tourism represents a golden opportunity to break down the barriers of ignorance and prejudices.

Tourism has also the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) data shows the significance of tourism as a vehicle for job creation, generating revenues for host communities, representing around 1 in 11 jobs worldwide. It is in this spirit that UNESCO has advocated for a stronger recognition of the role of culture as an enabler of sustainable development and creative economy as a driver of growth and innovation.

We know the potential of tourism. We also know too well the impact of mismanaged tourism. Ancient monuments can be damaged under the pressure of mass tourism, and intangible heritage is at risk if not properly safeguarded. UNESCO sites such as World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks represent incredible opportunities for tourism, and we must ensure that they are managed responsibly and sustainably.

The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development is an opportunity to strengthen this positive dynamic between heritage and tourism. In 2017, UNESCO will launch several initiatives to support sustainable tourism development, with the European Union and other partners. UNESCO will co-host important conferences on tourism in the Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves and on culture and tourism with UNWTO. Sustainable tourism calls for new partnerships to better educate and inform, to foster new behaviors and strengthen accountability among all tourism stakeholders. This spirit guides the cooperation between UNESCO and the United Nations World Tourism Organization, to ensure sustainable tourism is a catalyst for positive change.

Irina Bokova