

UN officials highlight role of tourism in achieving sustainable development



27 September 2012 – United Nations officials today highlighted the role that tourism can play in achieving sustainable development objectives, as they marked [World Tourism Day](#).

“One of the world’s largest economic sectors, tourism is especially well-placed to promote environmental sustainability, green growth and our struggle against climate change through its relationship with energy,” [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said in his [message](#) to mark the Day.

Celebrated annually on 27 September, World Tourism Day serves to raise awareness among the international community of the importance of tourism and the contributions it can make in the economic, political and social sectors.

This year’s theme, “Tourism and Sustainable Energy: Powering Sustainable Development” seeks to advance the goals of the 2012 International Year of Sustainable Energy for All.

“Hundreds of millions of people around the world depend for income on this energy-intensive sector. Sustainable energy will allow tourism to continue to expand while mitigating its impact on the environment,” Mr. Ban said.

“Everyone has a role in sustainable tourism. I commend the tourism community for its growing commitment to sustainable energy. I also thank the tourists who play their part by off-setting their own carbon emissions, choosing ecologically friendly destinations and providers, or simply by postponing having their towels laundered. Every action counts,” he added.

The Secretary-General of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Taleb Rifai, [stressed](#) that sustainable energy in the tourism sector can also help reduce energy poverty by implementing the objectives of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative. The initiative seeks to ensure universal energy access, improve rates of energy efficiency and double the share of the renewable energy mix by 2030.

“Sustainable energy initiatives in tourism are creating economic opportunities and jobs for millions, whether in tourism, energy or other sectors. As UNWTO findings show, the return on investment in sustainable energy can be enormous, enabling tourism businesses to grow and create jobs,” Mr. Rifai said.

“I urge all tourism stakeholders – governments, businesses and tourists themselves – to play their part in reaching the UN goal of achieving sustainable energy for all by 2030 and position tourism at the centre of the clean energy economies of the future.”

This year’s main celebrations are in Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, Spain, with many other events taking place around the world, including a think-tank discussion on addressing the relationship between tourism and energy with industry leaders, academics and the media.

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