

The Mediterranean remains world leader in the tourism industry, in spite of economic and geopolitical challenges

Barcelona, 21st January 2016 – **International tourist arrivals** increased by 4, 4% worldwide in 2015, reaching a total of 1.184 million tourists. The Mediterranean welcomed more than 30% of these total arrivals and, according to the recent report of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), this number should reach **500 million in 2030**. This positive trend of the industry in the region significantly contributes to the economic growth and the **development of the Mediterranean countries**. It is necessary not only to further strengthen the industry, but also doing it in an innovative, sustainable and coordinated way.

The Mediterranean tourist arrivals, which represents 30% of the tourist global revenues and it is estimated to be increased between 2 and 5% annually, according to the WTO data published this week, demonstrates its capacity to adapt to changes on a global competitive world. **France, Italy, Greece, Spain and Turkey capture 80% of international tourist arrivals in the region**. The prospects are also very positive in the north of the Mediterranean, especially in Balkans countries such as Montenegro or Croatia. In the South, many efforts are being made in this regard such as in Morocco. In spite of the persistent economic and geopolitical challenges, the tourist industry positions itself as a driver for the regional growth and the creation of millions of jobs every year.

Even though the figures position the sector as a global leader, the Mediterranean tourism is still heterogeneous and fragmented. In a world every day more competitive led by innovation, the Mediterranean and its businesses have to find ways to offer tourist services consistent with the current scenario. The Mediterranean countries not only have to keep consolidating the competitiveness of the sector, but also improve it with more conviction and as a priority, through **alternative models** such as the creation of green hotels; the creation of **added value and transversal jobs**, all with the key **support of the private sector**. In a word, we must bet on a **sustainable tourism growth**.

Indeed, the **20+20 Declaration**, which was launched last November in Barcelona, under the initiative of the **Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME)**, and with the support of 26 regional and international organizations, takes into account these objectives and proposes the creation of a **Mediterranean Tourism Agency** and a common tourist brand. This new roadmap for the Euro-Mediterranean Association, stimulated by the private sector, proposes a sustainable and homogeneous tourist for the whole region, which may increase the competitiveness of businesses and SMEs of the sector.

In this regard, ASCAME will organize on May in Mersin (Turkey) a new edition of **MEDITOUR**, the main forum dealing with the tourist industry in the region, in order to analyze the need to boost tourism, under the coordination between the countries from both shores of the Mediterranean: Which should be our strategy?, Which tools could be implemented by the economic actors?, Which are the prospects of the climate change?. Those are some of the points that will be discussed during this event.

Undoubtedly, in order to make the tourist sector a tool able to raise levels of prosperity in the region, as outlined in the 20+20 Declaration, the collaboration between **the public and private sector** will be crucial. This collaboration may strengthen joint systems and tools of promotion and marketing, encouraging the Mediterranean tourism to be more competitive and to staying as a leader on the global market.

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