

Russian arrivals to Greece increased by 58% in 2011

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Visiting Greek Culture and Tourism Minister Pavlos Geroulanos met in Moscow on Thursday with Russian Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy Minister Vitaly Mutko, with talks focusing on bilateral relations in the sector of tourism.

"Our priority is 'responsible tourism' which respects the tourist and the United Nations Conference in Spain next September will deal with its development," Geroulanos told reporters after the talks.

The two ministers discussed the preparation of a common agenda regarding the UN's conference through the promotion of bilateral cooperation.

Mutko, on his part, said he was worried over the safety of Russian tourists in many countries, referring in particular to the recent poisoning of Russian citizens in Turkey. He also expressed the need for international cooperation aiming at the establishment of common criteria of safety for the protection of the tourists' lives and health.

The Russian minister also referred to the increased number of Russian tourists who choose Greece as their destination, a fact that confirms, as he said, the "historical and cultural ties between our two countries."

The two ministers' talks also focused on the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games, with the Russian side expressing interest in bilateral cooperation during the preparations of the Games as well as during their holding.

Geroulanos pointed out to a considerable increase in the granting of visas at the Greek consulate in Moscow during the first half of 2011.

"This is a good sign, which shows that we will exhaust all possibilities of the Schengen agreement so as to allow Russians citizens who wish to visit Greece to be able to do it without difficulties," the Greek minister added.