

World Tourism Day - 27 September 2007

UNWTO Message
Francesco Frangialli, Secretary-General



“Tourism opens doors for women” – the theme for the United Nations World Tourism Day on 27 September highlights an issue of fundamental importance for our future. Tourism is a sector of the economy that not only employs significant numbers of women, but provides enormous opportunities for their advancement.

This year’s host country is Sri Lanka, an active UNWTO Member for 30 years with a vibrant cultural heritage in which women have played a prominent role.

For this year’s celebration, UNWTO has launched a campaign and photo competition to increase public awareness of the great opportunities that our sector provides to women.

Women hold jobs across the employment spectrum from artisan or guide to CEO and Chairman of the board – in countries and companies of all sizes around the world. In recent years they have increased their share of the workforce to hold as many jobs as men, and this increase has been strongest in poor countries and in areas like handicrafts and community development which tie closely into cultural preservation. Recent research showed that in some African countries, women occupied positions such as Hotel General Manager, Chair of the Tourist Board, Airline Director, Conservation Area Manager, Legal Secretary and by no means least Tourism Minister.

The development of women’s role not only gives a society balance, but it strengthens economies and social structures. The challenges now revolve around issues like ensuring income parity, raising employment quality, creating reasonable workplace conditions and penetrating glass ceilings – issues which are relevant generally to Millennium Development Goal 3 and gender equality.

Here some facts are clear:

- Of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty around the world, 70 percent are women.
- Women do about 66 percent of the world’s work in return for less than 5 percent of its income.
- Societies where women are more equal stand a much greater chance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

In this context one of the most important characteristics of tourism is its great capacity to create employment for women and for youth and particularly at a community level in poor countries. This is a major potential for responding to the war on poverty.

I look forward to celebrating World Tourism Day with you.