



Message of Mr. Wu Hongbo
United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

International and national tourism and travel for business, leisure and recreation feeds the spirit of exploration and enhances mutual understanding. Tourism is a rapidly growing economic sector, not only in industrialized countries but also in the developing nations. It is estimated that in 2014 some 5 to 6 billion people will make a holiday sojourn in their own country, while more than 1.1 billion people will visit another country as tourists. These numbers are expected to grow rapidly. Tourism can create business and employment opportunities, enhance the appreciation of natural and cultural heritage, and contribute to poverty reduction programmes. However, national and international tourism markets are increasingly competitive. Investments in the tourism sector and the infrastructure and services need to be carefully planned in order to ensure that the public and private investments yield optimal dividends, and that the host communities derive fair benefits. Furthermore, cultural heritage, urban and rural landscapes, environmental resources and biodiversity need to be protected effectively for the benefits by not only the current but also the future generations.

Tourism creates linkages across sectors in the economy; hence it can contribute to economic diversification as well. The development of sustainable tourism, therefore, requires that countries develop national strategies anchored on sound policies and regulatory and institutional frameworks, thereby ensuring the contribution to tourism and economic growth and poverty reduction on the one hand, and the protection of the environment, natural resources and cultural heritage on the other. A memorable tourism experience will also serve to bring diverse nations and cultures together.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) is pleased to co-organize with Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts & Tourism Organization (ICHTO) in Tehran the *United Nations Symposium on Mainstreaming Sector Policies into Integrated National Sustainable Development Planning: Enhancing Sustainable Tourism, Urbanization, Resource Efficiency, Biodiversity and Environmental Protection*, from 14-16 October 2014. The Symposium will offer new and unique opportunities for exchange of information on successful planning, policies and good practices. It is also expected that the Symposium will foster opportunities to identify novel pathways for constructive international multi-stakeholder cooperation among all concerned sectors, government representatives and private entities, tourism policy makers and planners, experts and practitioners, as well as civil society, academia and non-governmental organizations. I welcome all of you, the participants, and wish you constructive dialogues and fruitful outcomes at the Tehran Symposium.