

Emerging Tourism Markets - The Coming Economic Boom

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International tourism in emerging & developing markets has grown at an average rate of 6-8% over the past decade. Twice the rate of industrialized countries.

* Tourism is a crucial contributor to these countries' income - up to 70% for the world's poorest countries.

* Development financing from global Trade, Poverty Alleviation and Climate Response should recognize the long term potential of tourism as a sustainable growth engine.

With international travellers projected to almost double by 2020, the most significant increases are expected to take place in markets like China, India and destinations in South-East Asia. The Gulf States and emerging Eastern Europe complete this picture, followed by the Latin American and finally African markets.

Many of these are becoming important outbound markets, backed by growing middle classes on the one hand, and liberalising policies promoting mobility on the other. Chinese tourists already spent about US\$ 30 billion abroad in 2007, according to UNWTO figures.

The domestic travel potential of emerging markets - in 2006 China registered 1.6 billion trips and India 461 million - is a further proof of their long term importance for international tourism.

Between 1996 and 2006, international tourism in developing countries expanded by 6% as a whole, by 9% for Least Developed Countries, and 8% for other low and lower-middle income economies. Against this backdrop, the sector will be more and more recognized as a key agent in national poverty reduction strategies and in development financing.

Addressing the UK Tourism Society Conference, Assistant Secretary-General Geoffrey Lipman identified investment in infrastructure and human resource training, as key issues to make this trend sustainable. He also discussed the importance of credible long term climate response strategies - which allow these countries to realize their tourism growth potential.

Lipman said 'It is fair to assume that this growth scenario will suffer from the economic downturn and more than fair to say that massive prolonged increases in fuel price, with few short term options (at least for airlines), as well as other 'mega crises' will have a fundamental depressant effect. But the numbers of potential travellers are so huge and the logic of targeting tourism for development so pervasive that the long term growth prospects will remain substantial by any measure'.

He noted further that substantial resources are expected to be earmarked in the coming years for Aid to Trade from the Doha Round, development financing related to the Millennium Development Goals, as well as climate response and clean technology transfer. Finally he stressed the importance of public private partnerships to ensure that poor and emerging states access these funds for tourism development, underscoring the role of UNWTO in supporting this process.

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