



## **Message of Dr. Sadiq Syed, Deputy Representative and Officer-in-Charge, UN Women Multi-Country office, South Africa**

**Round Table on “Responsible Tourism”, 13-14 February 2014, Johannesburg, South Africa**

### Promoting Women’s Rights in Tourism in South Africa

Honorable Ministers and Legislators  
Director of The Capston  
Senior Officials of the Government  
Representatives of the civil society and faith based organizations  
Representatives of the Media  
Participants of the Round Table

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here this morning at the round table on “Responsible Tourism” organized by The Capston. On behalf of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), I express our appreciation to The Capston, associated organizations and participants for organizing the Round Table on this important subject and also focusing on the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment within the Tourism Sector.

Empowering women to participate in economic development at all levels and in all sectors is essential to building solid, strong economies and stable, just societies<sup>1</sup>. **Women’s economic empowerment**<sup>2</sup> means the ability of women to bring about positive changes in their lives and societies as a result of their participation in economic activities. This includes, among others, economic

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women and UN Global Compact (2010) *Women’s Empowerment Principles: Equality means Business*. UN Women, New York. In UN Women, UNWTO (2010) *Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010-2011*. UNWTO, Madrid.  
<http://ethics.unwto.org/en/publication/global-report-women-tourism-2010>

<sup>2</sup> UN Women definition of Empowerment: an increase to people’s ability to bring about changes and drive valuable outcomes.

rights; functioning effectively in the economy; participating in labour and product markets on equal terms with men; incorporating and valuating the unpaid work within the households as economic activity; voice, leadership and decision-making; accumulating their own assets; and influencing governance and institutional structures.

In terms of economics opportunities, despite the significant progress in female labor participation over the past 25 years, pervasive and persistent gender differences remain in productivity and earnings across different sector and jobs. Indeed, Women now represent 40% of the global labor force, 43% of the world's agricultural labor force, and more than half the world's university students. However, there exists employment segregation by gender: there are significant and systematic differences between men's and women's jobs, whether across sectors, industries, occupations, types of jobs, or types of firms. Female farmers and entrepreneurs have less access to land and credit than their male counterparts. Women also are overrepresented among unpaid and wage workers and in the informal sector. As said, women account high percentage of the total workforce, but 58% of all unpaid work, 44% of wage employment, and 50% of informal employment<sup>3</sup>.

**Tourism** is one of the world's largest industries as it covers a wide range of cross-cutting activities involving the provision of goods and services, from accommodation, transport and entertainment to construction, agriculture and fisheries<sup>4</sup>. It is a major contributor to the economic development accounting for some 9 % of the world's GDP and around 8% of all jobs<sup>5</sup>. In developing countries, it is one of the major export sectors and the primary source of foreign exchange earnings in 46 of the 49 Least Developing Countries (LDCs)<sup>6</sup>. In 2009, international tourists spent US\$267 billion in Developing Countries (DC), over five times the level of official development assistance (ODA) which goes to these countries. With regards to job creation, tourism is a labor-intensive industry with wide-ranging informal sector providing significant

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<sup>3</sup> World Bank (2012) World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development. WB, Washington DC.

<sup>4</sup> UNCTAD (2007) FDI in Tourism: The Development Dimension. United Nations, New York and Geneva.

<sup>5</sup> UNWTO (2013) UNWTO Highlight - 2013 Edition. UNWTO, Madrid.

<sup>6</sup> UNWTO (2004) Tourism and poverty alleviation. UNWTO, Madrid.

labour opportunities for both women and men. This enables participation in the industry at a number of different scales and levels of the market. So, although in the economic analysis the degree of attention paid to tourism is often limited, this sector is well positioned in promoting **poverty alleviation** and **women's economic empowerment**.

South Africa has earmarked tourism as a key sector with excellent potential for growth: the government aims to increase tourism's contribution, both direct and indirectly, to the economy from the 2009 baseline of R189,4-billion (7.9% of GDP) to R499-billion by 2020 (National Department of Tourism, 2012). Tourism supports one in every 12 jobs in South Africa. The sector was given a massive boost by the successful hosting of the World Cup in 2010, when the country received a record-breaking 8.1-million foreign visitors. Despite tough global economic conditions, tourism grew in 2011, with 8.3-million international tourists.

The National Tourism Sector Strategy adapted by the Government of South Africa (attached) mandates the government to "target the needs of the youth, women, workers, the rural poor, the elderly and people with disabilities". However, much needs to be done to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in the Tourism sector.

Indeed, the concept of **sustainable tourism** (ST) was introduced as an effective tool for poverty alleviation at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. In 2005 the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) identified an agenda of 12 aims for sustainable tourism<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, tourism gained significant recognition internationally in 2012: at the G20 Summit in Mexico and at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) world leaders agreed "tourism can make a significant contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development, has close linkages to other sectors, and can create decent jobs and generate trade opportunities" ('The Future We Want').

In relation to gender economic opportunities, the literature on tourism and women, including the *Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010-2011*

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<sup>7</sup> **Sustainable Tourism** is defined as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" UNWTO, UNEP (2005) *Making Tourism More Sustainable – A guide for policy makers*. UNWTO, Madrid. In UNWTO (2013) 'Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook' UNWTO, Madrid.

published by UN Women and UNWTO, highlights important benefits of tourism for women: Tourism renders more jobs and employment opportunities to women compared with other industries (46% of the workforce are women). The Report also indicates that tourism has a wide employment multiplier-effect, offers low barriers to entry and is more likely to employ women and persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups than other industries. I.e. tourism absorbs those who do not have access to formal employment opportunities into informal sectors such as street vending and taxi services.

Therefore, it is an industry where the main challenge is not access to the labour market, but securing rights of the workers and entrepreneurs as recognized in the Article 5 of the UNWTO Global Code for Ethics in Tourism<sup>8</sup> and especially decent work, which is central to reducing poverty<sup>9</sup>. However, along with opportunities, tourism also brings its share of **risks** to women such as low-status work, gender stereotyping, unequal treatment, informal employment, low-paid works<sup>10</sup> and sexual discrimination and exploitation.

We are confident that this round table with presence and participation by experts and other professionals help in promoting an enabling and engendered environment for women in tourism industry.

Once again, on behalf of UN Women commends the efforts of the organizers and wish the Round Table Success.

Thank you once again!

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<sup>8</sup> UNWTO (1999) Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

<sup>9</sup> ILO (2008) *Reducing poverty through tourism*. Geneva

<sup>10</sup> L. Ferguson (2011) "Promoting gender equality and empowering women? Tourism and the third Millennium Developing Goal" in *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 14.