

[World could see 1.8 billion tourists by 2030 – UN agency](#)

27 December 2017 – By 2030, there could be 1.8 billion tourists – just over one in five persons in the world – travelling around the globe, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has said.

Speaking with *UN News*, Taleb Rifai, the Secretary-General of UNWTO, highlighted the role of travel and tourism in impacting global developments and making the world a better place.

“It is bringing the world together in an incredibly impressive way: it is making the world smaller, more connected, more informed, and therefore... a more caring world,” he said.

At the same time, the global phenomenon has also brought about serious challenges, including pollution, waste, labour exploitation, prostitution and abuse of children, and looting of natural resources.

Given that all human activity has both advantages and disadvantages, it is up to people to ensure that the impacts from tourism are positive and contribute to sustainable development, Mr. Rifai noted.

“1.8 billion travellers by 2030 could be 1.8 billion opportunities or 1.8 billion disasters and it is all up to us [to choose].”

In recognition of the potential of the tourism industry, the General Assembly had [proclaimed 2017](#) as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

Listen to the full interview with the UNWTO Secretary-General below:

AUDIO: 1.8 billion tourists set to travel world by 2030

[UN chief commends peaceful vote in Liberia, dispatches Nigeria’s Obasanjo](#)

27 December 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Wednesday welcomed the peaceful conduct of the second round of the presidential election in Liberia, and announced he is sending former Nigerian leader Olusegun Obasanjo to support the country in the first peaceful transfer of power from one democratically-elected leader to another in more than 70 years.

The Secretary-General hopes that the will of the Liberian electorate will be respected and that a seamless transfer of power will take place within constitutional timelines, his spokesperson [said](#) in a statement.

Mr. Guterres has requested Mr. Obasanjo, who is a member of the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, to travel to the capital, Monrovia, from 28 to 30 December.

Liberians yesterday voted in a second round of elections, deciding between Vice-President Joseph Boakai and George Weah, a politician and former soccer star.

The first round of elections in the west African country was held in October. A runoff was originally scheduled for November, but was delayed due to allegations of voter irregularities by a third candidate.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly in September, outgoing President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf the first woman elected as head of an African country said that the polls would signal an irreversible course towards democracy in the country.

Ms. Sirleaf took office in 2006, ending a civil war that erupted under the leadership of her predecessor, Charles Taylor. This election would be the first time in more than 70 years that the country sees a peaceful transfer of power from one democratically-elected leader to another.

High-level Advisory Board

Mr. Obasanjo is one of 18 global leaders, senior officials and experts on the high-level board created earlier this year to advise the Secretary-General on mediation and back those efforts around the world.

The former President of Nigeria [was involved in mediation efforts](#) in Angola, Burundi, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa, among others.

The high-level board is part of the Secretary-General's pledge for the UN to embark on a surge in diplomacy for peace.

The idea, according to Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland and also a high-level board member, is to prevent wars by hybrid peace-building.

Ms. Halonen spoke to *UN News* during the board's first meeting last month.

[General Assembly approves \\$5.4 billion](#)

UN budget for next two years

26 December 2017 – Concluding the main part of its 72nd session, the United Nations General Assembly on Sunday took a number of key actions, including approving a nearly \$5.4 billion programme budget for the Organization for the biennium 2018-2019.

The budget covers UN activities across a range of areas, including political affairs, international justice and law, regional cooperation for development, human rights and humanitarian affairs, and public information.

The approved amount is \$286 million (or 5 per cent) below the budget for the current two-year period 2016-2017 and \$193 million below the proposal made by the Secretary-General in October this year.

In addition to the budget, the 193-member General Assembly also adopted a number of key resolutions, including reforms in areas of peace and security, and of management.

Speaking at the closing session, Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly, stated that progress is not measured by the number of resolutions adopted, but rather by the impact the United Nations makes on people's lives.

"Our work is not yet done. We have more to do next year," he said, noting areas, including the Global Compact for Migration, the peacebuilding and sustaining peace agenda, maintaining momentum on the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), as well as Security Council reform.

"To have meaningful outcomes from all these processes we need to talk, and more importantly, to listen, to one another. These agenda items represent global challenges. And multilateralism is the tool we need to solve them," he added.

The UN budget

In approving the budget, the General Assembly also endorsed the proposal to move from a biennial planning and budgeting period to annual programme budget on a trial basis, as of 2020.

"This signals one of the [most significant shifts](#) in the programme planning and budgeting process of the Organization since the 1970s," stated a note issued by the Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

Explaining the details of the new budget, Johannes Huisman, the Director of Programme Planning and Budget, in the Office of the Controller, told *UN News* that most of the cuts were under operating or "non-post" areas, such as information technology or travel.

To a lesser extent, reductions also applied to personnel or post resources, he said.

Emphasizing that the UN budget will ensure that there is value for money, he said “This is a reassurance we can give to the tax-payers that no stone will be left unturned to make sure that the money is spent properly and ultimately benefits the world community in the areas where the UN is needed.”

Listen to the full interview below:

AUDIO: No stone left unturned to ensure budget benefits the world community

[UNICEF official calls 2017 ‘horrible’ for children in Yemen](#)

26 December 2017 – Children in Yemen could not have a worse year than 2017, according to a senior official from the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)).

“2017 was a horrible year for the children of Yemen,” UNICEF Representative in the country, Meritxell Relaño, told *UN News* by telephone from the capital, Sana’a.

More than 80 children were killed or injured in December alone, while millions face a cholera epidemic, looming famine, a disruption in health services and a blockade hampering delivery of much-needed supplies.

She urged a political solution for what she said was a man-made conflict and warned that without a political solution many more children would die.

Ms. Relaño recounted meeting a woman and her dying 7-year-old son Ali in a hospital in Aden.

“He was like skin on bones. I asked why they had not come sooner and the mother told me that she could not afford to ride the bus to the hospital. The levels of poverty in the families [have] now reached levels that are unsustainable,” she said.

To offset some of this type of need, Ms. Relaño noted that some 1.3 million families, or about 8 million people, are being reached with emergency cash as part of a transfer project between UNICEF and the World Bank.

She also praised successful efforts to deliver vaccines and implement a polio immunization campaign this year to benefit some 5 million children and provide treatment for 200,000 children with acute malnutrition.

“Yemenis who work on the ground to support the Yemenis are the true heroes,” she said, noting the efforts of local authorities, doctors, nurses and teachers in the country.

AUDIO: UNICEF official shares memories of “a horrible year” for children in Yemen

[Congo: UN chief welcomes ceasefire between Brazzaville, Reverend Pastor Ntumi](#)

26 December 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Tuesday welcomed the signing of a ceasefire between the Government of the Republic of the Congo and a group led by Reverend Pastor Ntumi.

In a statement from his spokesperson, the Secretary-General [said](#) he hoped the agreement would “lead to a sustainable peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Pool region of the country and the alleviation of the dire humanitarian situation there.”

The Pool refers to the Congo’s oil-producing southern region that includes the capital, Brazzaville. Fighting broke out in April of last year, and has since displaced one out of three people, and exposed residents to alleged human rights violations, including sexual violence and threats.

The Government and Pastor Ntumi signed an agreement on 23 December to cease hostilities in the area.

The UN, in today’s statement, said it stands ready to support the parties in implementing the agreement.