International travelers: one billion PLUS!

By Dr. Richard Kelley

Despite all the troubles the world is experiencing, international travel continues to grow. So says the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) in a detailed report, Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015, released earlier this week. The report not only highlights the global Travel & Tourism industry’s trends and economic impact but also makes predictions for its future and, finally, suggests what we must do to keep the industry growing.

For each of the past 25 years, WTTC has published research demonstrating the contribution of the Travel & Tourism industry to the world economy. This year’s report, released just this past Tuesday, March 24, contains extensive data on 184 countries and 25 geographic or economic regions.

The overall picture is positive:

• Travel & Tourism’s contribution to the global economy grew for the fifth consecutive year in 2014 and is expected to grow an additional 3.7 percent in 2015.
• Travel & Tourism generated US$7.6 trillion (9.8 percent of global GDP) and supported 277 million jobs (1 in every 11 jobs on the planet) in 2014.
• Travel & Tourism not only outpaced the general economy but also grew faster than major industries like automotive manufacturing, financial services and health care.

The WTTC Economic Analysis report is available free online at http://bit.ly/1BPcbH. Whatever one’s connection to the Travel & Tourism industry may be, I urge everyone to read at least the summary sections of this report and understand the vital issues it covers.

Two of the most important issues we face today are Freedom to Travel and Security for Travelers. We must continue working to convince governments of the huge economic advantages generated by policies that encourage travel across national borders. Visas, currency controls, airline regulations and landing rights are all important issues that must be addressed. This week’s tragic crash of a German aircraft full of vacationers plus last year’s loss of two other passenger planes – one of them shot down over a war zone along the border between Russia and Ukraine – speak volumes about the issue of Security for Travelers.

The Policies for Growth of our industry are equally important. I agree with WTTC president and CEO David Scowsill that we need to ensure that the business environment remains conducive to the growth of Travel & Tourism. This means planning and investing in appropriate infrastructure (such as roads and airports) and creating a tax environment that allows the private sector to be competitive both locally and globally. I have written many articles about the negative impact that punitive taxation has on both inbound and outbound travel.

Planning Tourism For Tomorrow is a huge responsibility for our generation. We must safeguard the environment of the tomorrow’s world by finding a proper balance between people, profits and the health of our planet. WTTC and Outrigger Resorts both promote the very best in sustainable tourism through a number of initiatives, and I hope this will remain a priority for the future leaders of this industry.

Over 1.1 billion people traveled internationally in 2014. In 2015, we expect that number to exceed 1.2 billion, with the strongest growth taking place in Asia and the Pacific, right where Outrigger Resorts is also continuing to grow.

Yes, around the globe, Tourism is Everybody’s Business.