

WTTC president opens ITB

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Berlin, Germany - During her speech to distinguished guests at the opening ceremony of ITB Berlin, Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO, said: “Last year, right here on this stage, I said travel is back. Now, just 12 months later, it’s not just back, it’s booming.

“Compared to last year, we’re already seeing double digit growth in visitor numbers from key source markets such as the UK, Spain, and Greece. Further afield, our data shows more travellers from the U.S. will visit Germany this year than last.

“Across Europe, we’re seeing massive increases in the number of international arrivals. Arrivals into Greece and Portugal are up more than 20% year on year and Spain, the second most popular destination in the world, is also set to have a great year with arrivals already up 13pc.

“2024 is set to be not just a bumper year for tourism here in Germany, but for Europe and the world.

“Travel & Tourism was forecast to account for 9.2 % of global GDP in 2023 or \$9.5 trillion dollars, employing 320 million people. That’s one in 11 jobs around the world. And our vast contribution to the global economy is also set to grow.

“By 2033, more than one in nine jobs worldwide will be in this sector. In just nine years, we will account for 11.6 pc of global GDP. And over the coming decade, Travel & Tourism will grow at double the rate of the wider economy.

“Travel is one of the great accelerators of global development. And yet, economics alone cannot capture the value of Travel & Tourism. Travel is a force for good in so many profound yet hard-to-quantify ways. At a time of political polarisation, it leads people to common ground. At a time of ecological collapse, it teaches the sanctity and majesty of the natural world.”

Closing her speech, Simpson said: “But just as travel is best undertaken with eyes and minds open, we must be open-eyed about the challenges we face. WTTC data shows that our sector was responsible for 8.1% of global emissions in 2019. That’s why our sector’s efforts towards more sustainable fuels like SAF, biodiesel, and alternative marine fuels are so important.

“We as a sector must also embrace future technologies and most importantly, the AI revolution. The effect of AI on Travel & Tourism will be more profound than any technological development since the invention of the world wide web”.

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