

## A Way Forward for USA Travel & Tourism

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Less than 6 months after WTTC's Global Travel & Tourism Summit held in Washington DC where great debate was had on the need to open minds to the potential of the Travel & Tourism industry and its shifting geographical landscape, WTTC and its US Members are determined to call on US Government to recognize the state of the industry.

Over the past 15 years the US national economy has lost an average of US\$20 billion a year due to the declining status. According to Travel Industry Association of America calculations, an investment in growth could generate an estimated 8.1 million extra foreign visitors, representing an additional US\$13.4 billion contribution to GDP and 153,000 more jobs for every one per cent of world market share regained.

While WTTC was glad to see the support of four US Cabinet Secretaries and one Special Ambassador at the Summit in Washington DC in April at the Summit in Washington DC in April and felt that this was a very positive step in the right direction, WTTC President Jean-Claude Baumgarten asserted that; 'The next step needs to be taken in order to firmly cement public and private sector cooperation in a bid to reverse the current trend in the US to lose world market share.'

WTTC Chairman Vincent A Wolfington added, 'WTTC, along with the Travel Business Roundtable and Tourism Industry Association of America endorse the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board's National Strategy recommendations for Department of Commerce Secretary Gutierrez. However, we stand together in saying that the document and its vital recommendations must be adequately funded otherwise the US risks continually falling behind its global competitors. An investment in the Travel & Tourism industry now is an investment in not only the economic future of the US but also the social cohesion and security, which contributes to world peace.'

WTTC's Manifesto for the US Travel & Tourism Industry outlines the following five recommendations:

The economic and social importance of Travel & Tourism needs to be recognized at the highest levels of government. Those countries around the world whose governments have committed to stimulating Travel & Tourism development through constructive dialogue and marketing activity with the private sector are the ones that have been most successful in terms of growth in both arrivals and visitor spending.

The White House Conference on Travel & Tourism, which was held more than ten years ago, and the creation in 2005 of the US Travel & Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB), operated through the US Department of Commerce, were timid steps in the right direction. Yet resolutions made at the conference have not been implemented and the TTAB has not been empowered to take any actions. Some progress has been made as a result of the Board's recommendations to the Bush Administration. Restoring America's Travel Brand: A National Strategy to Compete for International Visitors addresses the barriers that impede international visitors from taking a trip to the USA. The TTAB should be provided with the necessary resources and co-operation from the federal government to assist in achieving the goals laid out in this strategy.

In order to mobilize all the players and give substance to the Rice-Chertoff initiative, we propose that US stakeholders from both government - federal and state - and the private sector meet at a nationwide conference around the theme Reconquer Markets, Regain Confidence. The main aim of this conference should be to develop a three-year agenda with clearly defined objectives geared towards regaining the status of the USA as the most important Travel & Tourism destination in the world.

Security is a major challenge for the Travel & Tourism industry, yet seamless access to transport is critical for the future growth of the industry. Five years after 9/11, the traveller has accepted the need for enhanced security measures. The US Government must focus and finish its plans to introduce new security measures based on biometric technology. This will not only boost public confidence but will also provide a positive image of the USA, thanks to the technology engaged for the benefit of both visitors and resident citizens. Leaders of the security industry will play an important role in the proposed nationwide conference.

Since the US Government has fully recognized the potential of Travel & Tourism and is working towards finding the delicate balance between security at borders and efficient travel across those borders, it is time to embrace a national marketing strategy. That strategy should mandate a significant national promotional budget directed towards those markets that represent the greatest potential for the destination. WTTC estimates that US\$200 million would be a realistic starting point from which a marketing campaign could make a significant impact.

For the entire Manifesto document, please click here:

<http://www.wttc.org/publications/pdf/US%20Manifesto.pdf>

For the WTTC Summit Highlights report, please click here:

<http://www.wttc.org/publications/pdf/Summit%20Report06.pdf>

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