

Executive Council

Ninetieth session
Mombasa, Kenya, 19-21 June 2011
Provisional agenda item 2

CE/90/2
Madrid, May 2011
Original: English

Communication of the Chair

Message of the Chair of the UNWTO Executive Council, the Hon. Michela Vittoria Brambilla, Minister of Tourism of Italy

Minister Balala,
Dear Colleagues, Distinguished Representatives,
Mr. Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and an honour for me, on behalf of all members of the Executive Council, to thank the people and the Government of Kenya for welcoming us so warmly in Mombasa. We are in a really beautiful tourism destination, very well known all over the world. We feel privileged to be here, to add the spicy flavours of Africa to the experience of the Executive Council.

As my ancestors, the Latins, used to say many centuries ago, "Ex Africa semper aliquid novi", which translates "Out of Africa, always something new for us". It is in this spirit, that we look forward to discovering more about Kenya, and we thank our host for providing us with more opportunities at the end of our working sessions.

Dear Colleagues,

After the last meeting of the Executive Council in Kish Island, last October, the final data on international arrivals for the year 2010 have confirmed that recovery in the tourism sector is faster than expected. On the overall, in 2010, travellers around the world have reached 935 million, 23 million more than during the peak recorded in 2008. However, the pace of recovery is not the same in the different regions of the world. The growth rates registered in Europe, for instance, are quite satisfactory, though lower than in the upcoming Asia and Pacific region. Moreover, receipts are still below pre-crisis levels.

Therefore, as the Secretary General will present in detail, on the one hand, we have the proof that the tourism sector is indeed very resilient, even face to an unprecedented global crisis. On the other hand, from now on, National Authorities have to focus on the emerging trends and work closely with the industry, to quickly adapt the tourism offer to the demand. Doing so, we must take into account the fact that source and destination markets are evolving very rapidly.

Looking at the current year, while the world economy has been restarted, in some parts of the globe, unforeseen events have occurred. There have been a number of natural disasters: heavy snow storms in the USA and Europe during New Year's vacations, devastating floods in Australia and South

Asia in the first months of the year, catastrophic earthquakes in New Zealand and in Japan, followed by deadly tsunami and nuclear alert, even the volcanic ash clouds from Iceland have reappeared in European skies. In the Mediterranean and the Middle East, deep social and political changes are underway, affecting the tourism industry throughout the region. The negative impact on tourism activities so far has been very heavy to shoulder for all affected Countries.

However, out of a very complex scenario, good points are emerging: on the basis of available data, there are positive signs that allow for a perspective of complete re-absorption of the negative effects in the medium term. To make this perspective come true, international cooperation, and this Organization in particular, will have to do whatever they can to be of assistance. All of us, we have to work hard to substantiate overall expectations for consolidated growth in 2011.

Furthermore, besides being confident that the growing trend in international arrivals will continue - even though at a more moderate pace than last year - we should give ground to the reassuring view that the GNP growth generated by tourism activities in the medium term will be sound, more and more oriented towards sustainability. And I use the word sustainability in a very broad sense, which encompasses economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects, objective constraints.

As you know, my Country is very committed to the promotion of the ethical dimension in tourism, which constitutes the conceptual basis of sustainable development. Since November 2008, we have established in Rome the Permanent Secretariat of the UNWTO Committee on Tourism Ethics, with the main task of stimulating a pro-active approach in the diffusion and implementation of the principles set out in the Global Code of Ethics. We have designed a Global Awareness-Raising Strategy, based on three pillars: systematic and widespread diffusion of the text; communication campaign, including organization of conferences targeted to different audiences; elaboration of proposals to be agreed between public and private stakeholders, to translate those principles into concrete rules of conduct, simple to apply and replicable in different Countries. We are very busy and we rely on the support of all UNWTO Members.

Mr. Secretary General,

In the capacity of Chair of the Executive Council, I would like to reaffirm our well-placed trust in the commitment of the Secretariat to carry on the reform process for a more relevant UNWTO.

The UNWTO should be seen more and more as an authoritative interlocutor in the international scene, able to address the needs both of developing economies, and of mature tourism destinations. We share the ambition to succeed in having Tourism recognized as a major contributor to economic and social development. We should endeavour to offer our contribution when financial and economic fora adopt reform plans, given the highly positive impact that tourism activities have on recovery and job-creation policies.

Making the UNWTO more visible, and its debates more concrete and in line with the international priorities, is a huge task, that implies not only the organizational skills of the Secretariat, but also a more pro-active involvement in decision-making process by Member States and Affiliate Members. We should be able to address current issues, to take practical decisions, to communicate those decisions not only to international institutions, national administrations and professional organizations, but also to the wider public. We should demonstrate that the UNWTO is able to react promptly and effectively to widespread concerns.

We could start implementing the new approach within this body, the Executive Council. For instance, we could begin with communication activities: having as a target concrete actions and announcing substantive decisions at the conclusion of our meetings.

Another aspect not to be undervalued is the importance of making information user friendly and easily available on-line. The Secretariat is working on the upgrading of the UNWTO communication tools. All of us should contribute to the success of this operation, for example boosting the dissemination of UNWTO information through links between our national web sites and the UNWTO web site. It is a simple suggestion, that can prove to be very effective.

Dear Colleagues,

We should start concentrating on this common goal right away, bearing in mind that in this session we are preparing work for the forthcoming General Assembly. With the Secretary General we have been compiling a pretty dense agenda for our meeting: besides the mandatory discussion on administrative, financial and statutory matters, and on the programme of work for the next biennium, we have strongly supported the idea of allotting enough time for an in-depth debate on wide-ranging policy issues.

Under agenda item 7, we are going to focus on topics concerning tourist protection: how to prevent travellers from being stranded and helpless in case of extra-ordinary and unforeseeable events; how to take concerted action, in a perspective of short and medium term. It is a complicate and highly sensitive issue, especially in these days, but we should strive to reach a common understanding, and communicate rapidly our ideas on ways to address possible solutions.

Then, under agenda item 8, we shall devote our attention to the presentation, by the Secretary General, of the UNWTO study on "Tourism 2030". It is a very important development: so far, we have been familiar with tourism trends forecasts up to the year 2020; tomorrow, we shall have at our disposal new projections, opening a new set of scenarios for long term strategies.

We are looking forward to a very substantive and fruitful meeting.