

Welcoming remarks

103rd UNWTO Executive Council

10 May 2016 9:30-13:00

Malaga, Spain

Excellency Mr. Mohamed Yehia Rashed, Minister of Tourism of Egypt and Chair of UNWTO Executive Council,

- Welcome and thank you for taking up the role of Chair of the Executive Council.
- We are very happy to have you here and look forward for working under your chairmanship.

Ms. Isabel María Borrego Cortés, Secretary of State for Tourism of Spain,

- It is an honour to welcome you once again to the Executive Council.
- Allow me to congratulate Spain for its positive performance in tourism where it continues to lead in the international markets as the 3rd most visited destination in the whole world.
- Allow me also to comment your commitment to make of tourism a pillar of a better life for all Spaniards by creating jobs and opportunities all around the country.

- And finally allow me to thank Spain, host country of the UNWTO Headquarters, for its hospitality and for being a longstanding and committed partner of the organization.

Mr. David Scowsill, President and CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council,

- It is a pleasure to have you here with us again and to continue advancing our shared vision of the sector.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

- *Buenos días* and welcome to the 103rd session of the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).
- I'd like to thank everyone for being here with us.
- We have a very strong level of attendance and I am very pleased to see so many familiar faces.
- We are delighted to return to Spain for this Council session, and even more delighted to be in Andalucía and in the city that has been called "the capital of the Costa del Sol".
- Our very first Executive Council was also held in Spain – back in May 1975 in Madrid.

- Back then, we had 78 Member States. Now, we are proud to have a membership of 157 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 450 Affiliate Members.

Dear friends,

- In 2015, international tourist arrivals grew by 4.4% to reach 1.184 million.
- Exports generated by international visitors worldwide rose 3.6% reaching US\$ 1.4 billion and making tourism the third most important export sector in the world after
- We predict that 1.8 billion people will travel across borders by 2030.
- While set to enjoy continued growth, our sector stands at a crossroads.
- Tourism can be a powerful vehicle for promoting and reaching the development milestones that we are aiming for.
- It can make a strong contribution to the three pillars of sustainability: social, economic and environmental.
- It can be a solution to a world of increasing fear and division, by fostering increased understanding and peace between nations, cultures and peoples.
- But we have work to do if we are to see this happen.

- It is up to us to embrace the opportunities created by innovation and new technologies.
- It is up to us to ensure that we continue to make travel safer, but also more seamless and accessible for all.
- And it is up to us to ensure that our sector serves the planet as well as its people.

My dear friends,

- Last September world leaders adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its 17 universal Sustainable Development Goals.
- Tourism is included in three of the Goals (8, 12 and 14) for its capacity to contribute to economic growth and jobs, sustainable production and consumption and marine conservation.
- Yet, tourism cross-cutting nature and multiplier effect on many other sectors positions makes it as a perfect fit to advance all the 17 Goals.
- As the UN Agency responsible for the promotion of tourism it is our utmost responsibility to be a leader in advancing this agenda in our sector.
- This is also one of the last times we will meet before the launch of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017.

- 2017 represents a unique opportunity to promote and advance the values of tourism in the global agenda.

Dear Friends

- During our thematic discussion tomorrow, we will look specifically at the issue of tourism, security and seamless travel.
- This is a global challenge that we need to face together.
- We should also be vigilant as we see an emerging trend to build new barriers to travel – this is a time to unite, not to isolate.
- Let us work in ensuring that enhancing security and facilitating tourism and travel always go hand-in-hand.
- I look forward to engaging with you further on this important and timely topic.

Dear Friends,

- Once again I thank you all for participating in the sessions over the next days and I thank our host for their kind hospitality.
- I wish you all a successful Council.