

The Boat of Tourism for World Peace and Development

- Address by Li Keqiang, Premier of the People's Republic of China

At the opening ceremony of the first World Conference on Tourism for Development

(May 19, 2016, draft for approval)

Distinguished President Nyusi,

Distinguished Secretary General Taleb Rifai,

Friends, ladies and gentlemen,

Today is the China Tourism Day and also the day when the first World Conference on Tourism for Development kicks off. As Chinese people say, it's a day of double blessings. On behalf of the Chinese government, I would like to extend my congratulations on the opening of the conference, my heartfelt welcome to guests from all over the world, and my respect to all that have worked hard for the development of global tourism.

Travel reflects people's aspiration and pursuit for a good life and is an important way for them to understand the new and the unknown. Travel is a cultural tradition in China since ancient times. As a Chinese saying goes, "the wise find pleasures in water and the benevolent in mountains". Ancient Chinese sages "read ten thousand volumes of books and travel ten thousand miles" and have left numerous famous works on travel. Xu Xiake, a well-known scholar in the Ming Dynasty, traveled far and wide in his lifetime, "visiting places and exploring subjects never reached or known by others". Based on his 30-plus years of travel, he wrote *Travels of Xu Xiake*, which was not only a geographical monograph that systematically recorded natural objects and phenomena, but also a brilliant travel note that described China's magnificent mountains and rivers, leaving an extensive and profound influence on later generations. May 19, the first day recorded in *Travels of Xu Xiake*, was designated as

China Tourism Day. Limited by economic and social development and resident income, very few people could afford to travel in the past, and some people living in remote areas never even went to a county town in their lives. But since the reform and opening up, more and more Chinese people has begun to travel thanks to China's high-speed economic growth, continuous increase in resident income and ever better traffic conditions. Especially in the new century, the consumption structure of Chinese urban and rural residents has been upgraded quickly, and travel has shifted from a luxury for few people to a necessary consumption for the general public. In 2015, domestic tourism in China exceeded 4 billion person times, tourism expenses accounted for 10% of resident consumption, more than 120 million person-time Chinese people travelled abroad and 130 million person-time foreign tourists came to China, and tourism income exceeded RMB4 trillion. It is expected that China's per capita travel time and tourism income will double in 2020.

China has a large territory, a long history, a large number of ethnic groups, picturesque natural scenery, resplendent traditions and culture, and diverse ethnic customs - these indicate great advantages and huge potential for tourism development. The Chinese government attaches great importance to the position and role of tourism industry. We have issued the *Tourism Law* and *National Outline for Tourism and Leisure* and launched a series of policies and measures to promote the reform and development of this industry. The purpose is to make tourism a strategic pillar industry for national economy and a modern service industry more satisfactory to the people, so as to embrace the emerging age of mass tourism.

- Tourism is a new force in fostering a new development engine in China. While some manufacturing industries are in overcapacity, tourism is in short supply in general, particularly high-quality and innovative tourism projects and services. Tourism investment increased by 40% on annual average in the past five years and exceeded RMB1 trillion last year. Modern tourism is a comprehensive industry that is integrated with the first, secondary and tertiary industry. It is a kind of new economy that not only promotes the consumption and value increase of agricultural products,

but also drives the development of more industrial products that meet consumer needs. It relates with more than 110 industries and contributes over 80% to catering, accommodation, civil aviation and railway passenger transport. "When one industry prospers, it prospers 100 other industries" - this is a true depiction of the tourism industry. In 2015, tourism made 4.9% direct contributions and 10.8% overall contributions to China's GDP. However, China's tourism development is still on a low level and its contribution rate to national economy is lower than world average. Going forward, China will take tourism development as an important part of promoting structural reform, especially supply-side structural reform, and boosting economic growth. We will put in place plans to promote tourism consumption and investment, implement measures to fully open the tourism market to private investors, intensify China-foreign co-investment and cooperation, and drive tourism development through reform and opening up. China will implement the paid vacation system, improve hardware facilities such as tourism traffic, scenic zones and spots, camp for self-driving travel and IT application, and tighten tourism market regulation, so that Chinese and foreign tourists can have more convenient, safer and happier travel experiences in China. We will also promote the "Tourism Plus" program, energetically foster countryside tourism, industrial tourism, cultural tourism and tourism for old age care and health preservation, combine them with "Internet Plus", and promote the integration of tourism with primary, secondary and tertiary industries, so as to improve China's economic quality and efficiency with tourism upgrade.

- Tourism is a broad stage for mass entrepreneurship and innovation. Innovation is the primary drive of development. To improve and strengthen China's tourism industry, we have to drive it with innovation, transform its development model and enhance its quality and level continuously. Rich tourism resources are distributed across China and the tourism chain is long, which creates opportunities of employment and entrepreneurship for labor forces at all levels and makes tourism one of the sectors where mass entrepreneurship and innovation is most active. In 2015, 80 million people were engaged in Chinese tourism industry, including 28 million people

of direct employment and contributing to 10% of the nation's total employment. We will continue to improve incentive policies, set up public service platforms and intensify occupational education and skill training, so as to create a favorable environment for more people to engage in tourism product development and service.

- **Tourism is a main force for poverty alleviation and elimination.** Lifting rural poor population out of poverty is a strenuous task for comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society and also an inevitable goal. China's poor population is mostly distributed in former revolutionary base areas, areas inhabited by minority nationalities, remote and border areas and poverty-stricken areas, where industrial and agricultural development is restricted by many factors but tourism development has unique advantages. Many of such places have stepped out of poverty by developing tourism. In the meantime, tourism has opened a gate to the outside world, broadened the view of local people, renewed their ideas, made them more upbeat and confident, and advanced social civilization. The Chinese government has put forth the goal of lifting 12 million people out of poverty through tourism development in the next five years.

- **Tourism is a booster for building a beautiful China.** Featuring low energy consumption, limited pollution and recyclability, tourism is a typical green industry. Chinese people often say that people should live on what the land can provide. In the past, this was understood as direct exploitation and utilization, meaning felling the forests for timber and draining the pond for fish, which damaged the eco-environment and made development unsustainable. However, with the rapid tourism development in recent years, people have become more aware that green mountains and clear waters are in themselves a mountain of gold and silver and that keeping them that way is keeping the source of wealth, so they are more conscientious in eco-environmental protection and sustainability. We will prioritize tourism promotion in ecological development, strongly advocate the concept of enriching the nation and benefiting the people through green development, insist on equal importance for environmental protection and development, and implement the most rigorous eco-protection system.

We will also establish a national park system, make overall plans for the development and protection of tourist attractions, allow for economic and ecological benefits at the same time, and blaze out a path characterized by the coordination between ecological protection and economic development.

- **Tourism is a bridge of friendly exchanges with foreign countries.** The relationship between two countries depends on the affinity between their peoples, and people-to-people affinity depends on communication and exchanges. Travel is the most direct and natural way of people-to-people exchange. It is the window of opening up, the bond of friendship and the messenger of peace. The Chinese government attaches great importance to the role of tourism in promoting cultural exchanges, has designated more than 150 countries as tourist destinations for Chinese citizens, and carried out the "Tourism Year" event with many countries including Russia, ROK, India and the U.S. We are willing to carry out all forms of tourism cooperation with more countries, hold a diversity of tourism activities that the general public can participate in and enjoy, and sow the seed of friendship during beautiful traveling experiences.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world is still far from tranquil, with regional conflicts and hotspot issues keeping emerging and terrorism issues aggravating. Peace and development are the common aspirations of peoples from all countries. Tourism development is not only inseparable from the peaceful and developing international environment, but also an important force to promote world peace and development. This session of conference takes "Tourism promotes peace and development" as its theme and thus comes with a strong practical significance. Almost one thousand guests from more than 100 countries and international organizations attended the conference, which shows that the international communities attach great importance to tourism, and also reflect deep aspiration to world peace and development from all countries. China is willing to act together with all countries to jointly promote the inclusive and sustainable development of world tourism in the spirit of open, innovative, mutual benefit and

win-win outcomes, and promote the new international relations with win-win cooperation as the core for the benefit of people in all countries. Hereby, I would like to make three suggestions:

First, boost world economic recovery by implementing international tourism cooperation plans. The global economy is lacking in growing momentum and needs a new driving force. As one of the fastest-growing and most resilient industrial sectors, tourism plays an important role in boosting world economic recovery. According to the World Bank's estimation, every US dollar spent on tourism can generate USD3.2 worth of economic growth for the world. At present, tourism is the largest industry because it contributes about 10% of global GDP and 30% of service export, and international tourists will increase from 1.2 billion to 1.8 billion person times in the next 15 years. China has topped the world for four years in a row regarding the number of outbound tourists, and Chinese tourists spent more than USD200 billion overseas last year. To further boost the development of world tourism, the Chinese government proposes to implement international tourism cooperation plans and make joint efforts to create a more convenient travel environment. All countries should further relax visa policies, simplify entry formalities, open more direct flights, and provide tourists with more professional and considerate sightseeing and shopping services. China encourages capable enterprises to go global, participate in infrastructure construction overseas including hotels and scenic zones, and promote interconnectivity in hardware facilities, software services and cultural exchanges. It also welcomes foreign enterprises to invest in China's tourism industry.

Second, strengthen south-north and south-south dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation in tourism and push for the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN Sustainable Development Summit last year adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which put forth three major tasks in the next 15 years - ending poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change. Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in the agenda, three are directly related with tourism. The UN General Assembly also

designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. Developed countries should provide more assistance, either through official channels or by means of trade promotion, to help the least developed countries improve their capability of tourism development, while developing countries should incorporate the goal of poverty alleviation in their tourism policies, provide more job opportunities for youths, women, aboriginal residents and the disadvantaged from the tourism industry, and make sure that poor and marginalized communities can share in the opportunities and achievements of tourism development. In the next five years, China will launch 50 international tourism cooperation projects, including the exploitation and protection of tourism resources, assigning experts to consult on tourism planning and training a group of Chinese tour guides and managerial personnel. It will provide training for 1,500 foreigners in China.

Third, give play to tourism's role as a bridge of peace for promoting the harmonious co-existence of people from all countries. Tourism plays a special role in promoting world peace because it deepens understanding, reduces prejudices and enhances tolerance. All countries should deepen tourism cooperation in various forms and at all levels and reinforce the respect, inclusiveness and understanding with different nations and cultures, so as to lay a solid foundation for promoting friendly exchanges among all people in the world. Countries and regions that are estranged from each other should relax the restrictions on people-to-people communication and let cultural exchange serve as the "ice breaker" in bilateral relations. Every country has the responsibility to take effective measures to deal with emergencies, protect tourist safety and object to all terrorist actions against tourists. We should take active steps to create a freer, safer, more convenient and comfortable travel environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has played a positive role in promoting international tourism exchange and cooperation, world peace and sustainable development. The Chinese government highly appreciates UNWTO's efforts and achievements and has had fruitful cooperation with it. Going

forward, we will continue to support and participate in UNWTO's work, communicate and coordinate with other countries more closely, and work with them to push the boat of tourism that carries the hope for world peace and development toward victory!

Thank you!