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Report on the implementation of the General Programme of Work 2017-2018: regional activities

I. Introduction

This report presents a summary of the activities carried out by the Regional Programme for the Americas since the 61st meeting of the Regional Commission held in San Salvador, El Salvador and Roatán, Honduras, on 30 and 31 May 2017. As in previous biennia, the Programme of Work is structured around two interdependent strategic axes: improving competitiveness and quality, while promoting sustainability and ethics in the development of tourism.

II. Activities

The UNWTO's activities in the Americas region have been guided by these strategic axes that are of global importance and have a direct impact at the local, regional and national levels.

A. Competitiveness and quality

1. In June 26 to 27 took place the **Forum on Tourism Facilitation** in Lima, Peru. The Forum was organized by the Ministry of External Trade and Tourism of Peru (Vice-Ministry of Tourism). Although the forum was attended by representatives from a wide range of areas and countries, the audience was mostly national. The structure of the forum with a professional moderator was very interactive and facilitated the public's participation.

2. At the request of the Ministry of Tourism of Mexico, the Regional Director delivered a speech at the **Miguel Alemán Foundation**, Mexico, where he addressed civil servants, media and business community on the current and future status of worldwide tourism. He also attended a special seminar for students at the **National Polytechnic Institute** (Affiliate member and TEDQUAL certified) where he made a presentation on the current and future status of worldwide tourism.

The Regional Director participated in the official opening as well as in the opening panel on Tourism Trends of the **17th International Congress of the National Tourism Business Council** (CNET by its acronym in Spanish). This event was inaugurated by the President of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, and the Secretary of Tourism, Enrique de la Madrid.

✓ Regional Courses

3. The UNWTO, the UNWTO.Themis Foundation, the Ministry of Tourism of Mexico and its Institute of Tourism Competitiveness, in conjunction with the Secretariat of Tourism of the State of Jalisco, held from 4 to 8 September 2017, in Guadalajara, México the **UNWTO Regional Course on Sustainable Tourism Strategies for Local Development**. The course was attended by around 50 officials from several States from this region including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Panama, Peru and Puerto Rico.

The ultimate objective of this course was to contribute to improving the quality, sustainability and competitiveness of local tourism destinations through the exchange of knowledge, tools, skills and experiences that allow decision makers to design and implement sustainable tourism plans.

4. The UNWTO, the UNWTO.Themis Foundation, the Ministry of Tourism of Argentina and the Tourism Institute of Tierra de Fuego, carried out the **International UNWTO course on Gastronomy as a Tourist Attraction Factor** in Ushuaia, Argentina, from 24 to 29 September 2017.

Around 50 qualified tourism officials from the UNWTO Member States, both national and international representatives from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru, participated in a theoretical-practical course which consisted of presentations, debates, group work and practical activities that facilitated the sharing of knowledge and useful tools for the identification, assessment, sustainable design of the gastronomic capital of a destination and also, to put into practice the theoretical contents and promote discussion.

5. In that frame, on September 27, was held the conference "**Where the taste takes us: from the sea to digital networks**", open to industry professionals and the general public, with the presence of the Minister of Tourism of Argentina, Gustavo Santos, high authorities from the Ministry, the Government of the Province of Tierra del Fuego, other local tourism official authorities and representatives of the Argentine private tourism sector. During the conference international experts in tourism informed about new trends and gave examples of good practices and international cases related to the subject.

6. In the frame of the celebration of the International Tourism Fair of Paraguay (FITPAR by its acronym in Spanish), and the International Seminar on Tourism Routes, the Secretariat of Tourism of Paraguay, UNWTO and its UNWTO.Themis Foundation organized the **Course on Tourism Routes for Community Development** which took place from 8 to 12 October. A total of 40 participants, 29 nationals, and 11 from a total of 10 countries in the Americas region (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Peru and Puerto Rico) attended the course.

This course was aimed at officials, professionals and university professors of Paraguay and officials of the UNWTO Member States whose functions are related to tourism, culture, product development, community development and tourism and cultural routes. The ultimate goal of this joint training initiative was to contribute to the improvement of quality, sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and local communities through the exchange of knowledge, tools, skills and experiences that allow decision makers to design and market tourist routes.

B. Sustainability and ethics

7. **Ideas and Strategies for a Sustainable Tourism Development**, Buenos Aires and Puerto Iguazu, Argentina, from 7 to 9 June.

The Deputy Regional Director for the Americas attended these events which were organized by the Tourist Hotels Association of Argentina (AHT its acronym in Spanish) and took place in two cities: Buenos Aires and Puerto Iguazu.

The Association was mainly interested in raising awareness of the actions taken by the UNWTO in the field of Sustainable Tourism Development, especially its relationship with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the UN 2030 Agenda. The target audience in both cities was constituted by national and local associations related to sustainability as well as others specialized in the environment exclusively.

8. **International Conference on Sustainable Tourism**, Managua, Nicaragua, 27 September. This International Conference was part of a series of workshops and conferences that the Nicaraguan Tourism Institute (INTUR by its acronym in Spanish) organized throughout the year in order to bring the latest developments on sustainable development trends, share experiences and sustainable tourism initiatives that are being carried out internationally and create awareness on how sustainable tourism contributes to the development and growth of the communities.

The Conference was opened by INTUR's Co-Director of Administration, Anasha Campbell, and was targeted to local and national audiences from the tourism sector and was attended by around 480 stakeholders from the private sector, local communities, government entities, tourism chambers and academia. The participation of international speakers enriched the contents of the event for which the public was very attentive and provided very interesting feedback.

9. A **Conference on Sharing Economy** together with the celebrations of **World Tourism Day** was organized by the Vice-Ministry of Tourism of Colombia and took place in Bogota on 27 and 28 September 2017. The Conference was an interesting platform for exchanging issues related to sustainability and good networking with the private sector. The Colombian government has developed a strategic development plan divided in four areas which has the total support of the private sector. UNWTO report was very well received by government and private sector.

10. The Deputy Regional Director for the Americas travelled to Panama to participate as a speaker at the **III Conference on Accessible Tourism for Latin America and the Caribbean: "Panama, a Route for All"** held on 30 October. This Conference has been celebrated for two consecutive years, the first one taking place in 2015 in Dominican Republic, and the second one in Ecuador in 2016. Both conferences were held by the respective counterparts in each country: the National Council on Disability (CONADIS by its acronym in Spanish) of the Dominican Republic and the National Council for Equality of Disabilities (CONADIS) of Ecuador.

This year was the turn of Panama, taking advantage of the global movement to encourage and educate the tourism sector about the economic opportunities that open up to potential clients, mainly seniors and people with disabilities and their families. A three-day-conference with around 150 participants, counted with national and international speakers, focused in different aspects of accessible tourism from general aspects to commercialization of products.

11. In that same frame, Panama Tourism Authority (ATP by its acronym in Spanish) organized the **Conference on Tourism and Climate Change** on 31 October, with the main objective to raise awareness amongst stakeholders about the great potential of tourism and the direct relationship that exists between Tourism and Climate Change, and how its impacts are being addressed by the sector at an international and national level. The main topics covered during the Conference were the relationship of tourism and global climate change, policies, agreements, and binding rules that currently exist, sector strategies in mitigation and adaptation, statistics and projections among others.

12. The Regional Director for the Americas participated in the Task Force for the Protection of Children in Travel and Tourism of the Americas (GARA by its acronym in Spanish) Annual Meeting. This group, chaired by Uruguay, gathered in Mexico representatives from Ministries of Tourism and social rights from Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica, Peru, Colombia, Uruguay, Guatemala and Paraguay. He delivered opening remarks at the **10th meeting of GARA on “UNWTO and Human rights”**.

He also provided support to the Ibero-american Network of Accessible Tourism through our Affiliate Member Red Estable from Spain in their **1st Ibero-American Summit on Accessible Tourism** delivering the opening remarks together with the Secretary of Tourism of the City of Mexico, the Secretary for Access to Rights and Equity of the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Undersecretary of Planning and Tourism Policy where a video message by the SG was also presented.

13. **Global Conference on Jobs & Inclusive Growth: Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism**, Montego Bay, Jamaica, 27-29 November. This Conference aimed to set a global agenda of partnerships for tourism in view of the 2030 Agenda and advanced the contribution of the sector to the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 8 on economic growth and jobs and SDG 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

During two days, sessions looked into partnership models in such areas as investment, infrastructure, international aid and development finance, human capital, social inclusiveness, climate change, resource efficiency, education and destination management.

It was a very successful event due to the quality of the panels, with numerous parallel sessions and with the highest ranked panellists during the three days. Around 1400 participants between attendees and speakers, including the President of Dominican Republic, Prime Minister of Jamaica, Prime Minister of St. Lucia and the Secretary-General of the OAS, as well as Ministers and Vice-Ministers of Tourism, Foreign Affairs, Education, and high level representatives from the private sector.

C. Institutional participation

14. In October 2016, the former Secretary-General and the Deputy Regional Director travelled to Mexico, Costa Rica, Uruguay and Paraguay.

In Mexico, both UNWTO officials had numerous meetings with the press, and paid an **official visit to the President of Mexico**, Enrique Peña Nieto. In this opportunity, the Secretary-General was presented with the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle, band grade which is the highest distinction conferred on foreigners in Mexico for outstanding services provided to the nation or mankind.

The State Secretary of Tourism of Mexico accompanied the UNWTO delegation all the time, and chaired several meetings with the Mexican tourism private sector and also a meeting with university of Anahuac' students, graduates and post-graduates.

In Costa Rica UNWTO Secretary-General opened the **International Conference P3: Planet, People, Peace** organized by CANAECO where he was the keynote speaker. This Conference was divided into several panels, one of which was conducted by the UNWTO Secretary-General and the Minister of Tourism of Costa Rica. There were a significant number of local, national and international participants. The axis of the meeting was the character of tourism as a relevant factor of development and as a transversal element that affects the three key axes of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.

The **official visit to the President of Costa Rica**, Luis Guillermo Solis, was very significant as he is one the Special Ambassador of the International Year and he expressed his commitment to supporting UNWTO initiatives in the field of sustainability.

There was also a luncheon with the stakeholders in the tourism private sector of the country, high authorities of the Costa Rican NTA and other personalities.

In Uruguay, the official visit was short but intense: the former Secretary-General was received by the **President of Uruguay** and later there was a reception by the Ministry of Tourism of Uruguay and the tourism private sector to welcome the Secretary-General. A press conference was held with Minister Kechichiam after the reception.

In Paraguay, the Secretary-General delivered the closing remarks of the **Seminar on Multi-destination Tourism Routes** with the Minister of Tourism, Marcela Bacigalupo, followed by the closing of the UNWTO.Themis Course on Tourist Routes for Community Development as it was mentioned before.

The following day, the Secretary-General was received by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay. Also, he attended the opening of FITPAR Fair, the most important tourism fair in Paraguay.

15. The former Secretary General, Taleb Rifai, closed the **XII International Tourism Fair (FITVEN)**, which took place on the Island of Margarita, Venezuela with presence of the President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro.

D. Technical assistance to countries

16. **Honduras:** Further Strengthening of the System of Tourism Statistics

Duration: February 2018 – March 2018.

Objectives: In 2016, and in collaboration with the National Tourism Administration of Honduras (IHT), UNWTO conducted a detailed review of the country's national tourism statistical system. One of the recommendations was to implement an automation of the expansion processes related to statistical surveys. In this regard, in 2018, Honduras requested additional UNWTO technical assistance to support IHT in the development and implementation of these processes.

Results achieved:

- Automate the process of quality control of sample information, estimation of periods without information and expansion of the sample of traveller characterization surveys of the flow count at borders and airports.
- Automate the process of expansion of the indicators of the expenditure survey and visitor profile.
- Generate reports on the results of the process of expansion of the count of flows at borders and airports and of the indicators of the expenditure survey and visitor profile.

17. **Paraguay:** Update the Paraguay Master Plan for Sustainable Development of the Tourism Sector

Duration: May 2017 and on-going

Objectives: To provide the National Tourism Administration of Paraguay with a growth strategy and an implementation plan to advance the tourism sector as catalyst for rapid economic development.

Results achieved:

- During the first phase of the Master Plan project UNWTO collaborated closely with national experts and stakeholders from the public and private sector to carry out a situation analysis of the tourism sector and come up with a vision for the period till 2025.
- The situation analysis presents a detailed assessment of key thematic areas, such as competitiveness, product and service quality, marketing and branding, human resources, sustainable tourism, and the institutional framework, and identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each area. Based on this analysis and building on the country's attractive and diverse natural and cultural heritage, UNWTO has come up with various growth scenarios, and identified selected priority markets.
- Upon the approval of the interim report with the situation analysis and vision, UNWTO worked together with national counterparts on the formulation of the strategic recommendations and the implementation and monitoring arrangements for the Master Plan. It is foreseen that the updated Master Plan can serve as a key document to guide the further sustainable development of tourism in Paraguay.

18. **Haiti:** Enhancing Local Economic Impact from Tourism Development in Jacmel

Duration: on going

Objectives: To enhance the economic participation of the local population into the tourism value chain by creating new long term job positions while ameliorating and diversifying the offer of existing tourism products as well as creating new sustainable ones.

Results achieved:

- Capacity building covering several topics such as storytelling, sustainable product development, introduction to SME development including web page and marketing knowledge, waste management, food safety, lifeguard training, first aid, client service, basic restaurant service, personal development and handicraft product development. The total number of beneficiaries of these capacity building activities is 149.
- Based on the skills obtained in the capacity building seminars, the project supports local people to develop and operate tourism businesses and excursions, e.g. through the provision of market intelligence, product presentations to potential travel agents,

preparation of promotional materials and the creation of a network of tourism enterprises in the destination.

- Improvement of the most visited tourism sites (three beaches and site of natural pools) by creating local site management organizations aiming to achieve a more transparent, professional, secure and sustainable management, and to achieve a self-sustained economic status. A Pilot Committee for Tourism in the South-East Department has been established in order to monitor and support the progress of the local site organizations. This committee is formed by representatives of several ministries, local authorities, private sector and local population, and supports the creation of standards and certificates for the management of beaches and protected areas.
- Creation and improvement of new and existing excursions to help communities increase their income, fund reforestation for the area and add value to local products like sugar cane and coffee.
- Development of 3-5 city circuits and activities that provide visitors with an opportunity to experience the culture, music, dance, arts and crafts, history, food, and people of Jacmel.

As the project area was severely hit by hurricane Matthew, in 2016 the Government focused on recovery efforts and continued completing project activities in the course of 2017.

E. Meetings at Headquarters

19. The annual meeting between the UNWTO and the Central American delegation took place on 19 January 2018, and was the first one held with the participation of the new Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili. With Dominican Republic as pro tempore Chair, the meeting was attended by delegations from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. Also, present at the meeting were the Secretary of State for International Cooperation and Ibero-America, Fernando García Casas, as well as the Secretaries of the Tourism Promotion Agency of Central America (CATA) and of the Secretariat of Central American Tourism Integration (SITCA), representatives from BECIE, FIIAPP and FEDECATUR.

This traditional meeting, which is held annually on the occasion of FITUR, allows the delegations to discuss and analyse the state of tourism in the Central American region, together with an update provided by the Secretariat on trends and outlook for the year in progress.



Montego Bay Declaration on 'Jobs and Inclusive Growth: Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism'

on the occasion of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017

We, the representatives of UNWTO Member States and Affiliate Members, tourism administrations, international and regional organizations, local communities, private sector and academia, gathered in Montego Bay, Jamaica on 27-29 November 2017 for the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Government of Jamaica, World Bank Group (WBG) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Conference on 'Jobs and Inclusive Growth: Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism', an official event of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 organized in collaboration with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHTA), Chemonics International, the George Washington University and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC);

*Recalling the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012 that endorses the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, *The Future We Want* which emphasizes that "well-designed and managed tourism can make a significant contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development, has close linkages to other sectors, and can create decent jobs and generate trade opportunities";*

Recalling the UN Resolution 69/233 of 19 December 2014 on the "promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection", emphasizing the need to optimize the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits stemming from sustainable tourism, particularly in developing countries;

*Recalling the UN General Assembly Resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 that endorses the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*, which underlines the need to "[...] develop and implement innovative tools to mainstream sustainable development, as well as to monitor sustainable development impacts for different economic activities, including for sustainable tourism";*

*Recalling the UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 on *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which adopts the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which features tourism in Goals 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth (8), sustainable consumption and production (12), and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources (14);*

*Recalling the UN General Assembly Resolution 70/193 of 22 December 2015, which designates 2017 as the *International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development* aiming at raising awareness on the contribution of sustainable tourism to development among decision-makers and the public, and encourages the UN system and all other actors to support sustainable tourism at all levels as an efficient instrument to contribute to sustainable development, while mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change, especially addressing global challenges such as poverty eradication, environmental protection, and economic empowerment;*

Recalling the principles of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism approved by the UNWTO General Assembly in 1999 and endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2001, particularly those related to community empowerment, child protection, gender equality and universal accessibility;

Considering the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP), notably the 10-YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme, a collaborative platform to bring together and scale up initiatives and partnerships to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production, that has as its main goal decoupling tourism growth from the increased use of natural resources;

Considering that tourism is one of the fastest growing and most resilient socio-economic sectors, accounting currently for an estimated 10% of world GDP, 1 in 10 jobs and 7% of global trade of goods and services and 30% of trade in services;

Considering that tourism has multiple links to other economic sectors and can generate development opportunities along the entire value chain, particularly in developing countries;

Considering that tourism has the potential to contribute, directly and indirectly, to all the 17 SDGs and is featured in three of the SDGs, namely Goal 8, 12 and 14;

Considering that tourism is based on human interaction between visitors and host communities, creating a link that can promote intercultural understanding and tolerance, encourage mutual respect among people and thus contribute to a culture of peace in a framework of safety and security;

Understanding the urgent need to mobilize and unlock a substantial increase in financing tourism development, especially in developing countries, through development cooperation such as Official Development Assistance (ODA), Aid for Trade (AfT) and South-South Cooperation, as well as private sector resources and innovative financing mechanisms;

Taking into account that SDG 17 calls for 'Partnerships for the Goals' between governments, the private sector and civil society, built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and planet at the centre;

Considering the unique set of challenges and particular vulnerabilities of Island States including higher relative losses due to natural disasters, greater susceptibility to terms of trade shocks and more limited borrowing capability to invest but also their capacity to change the structure of their economies faster which helps them remain competitive despite shocks.

Building on the legacy of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 and with the objective of setting a common action plan towards 2030, declare the following:

1. Cooperation and partnerships among all major stakeholders—governments at the national, sub-national and local level, international organizations, the private sector, academia and local communities— are vital for achieving the SDGs through tourism and require adequate governance and partnership mechanisms at all levels;
2. UNWTO Member States, Affiliate Members and other international organizations and private sector partners shall sustain the momentum created by the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 by creating a working group coordinated by UNWTO on the legacy of the 2017 vision. The legacy shall focus on a plan to be presented to international donors for inclusion in their future development assistance to developing and least developed countries, and to corporations for co-investment.

3. National governments, local authorities, private sector, financing institutions and relevant stakeholders shall develop an integrated and holistic approach to tourism development in order to leverage the sector's positive impact and multiplying effect on people, planet and prosperity, thus capitalizing on its value as a key contributor to sustainable development;
4. National governments, local authorities, private sector, financing institutions and relevant stakeholders shall promote innovative tourism development models which fully engage, integrate and empower communities, create decent jobs and eliminate any barriers between communities and tourism developers;
5. Governments, local authorities, private sector, the academia and the international community shall advance the collection and analysis of tourism data to measure tourism's full impact at national and local levels in line with the UNWTO Measuring Sustainable Tourism Initiative (MST) and the work of the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO).
6. National governments, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders shall create an enabling environment for the private sector and provide incentives for businesses to act according to the principles of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the 17 SDGs;
7. The donor community shall recognize the wide-ranging impacts of tourism on all dimensions of sustainable development and scale up its support to sustainable tourism at bilateral and multilateral level by increasing efforts and coordination in mobilizing resources for tourism development through existing global financing mechanisms as well as new financing facilities related to the SDGs, including the UNWTO Tourism for Development Facility;
8. Governments, the UN system, international organizations, global and regional financial institutions and the private sector shall prioritize inclusive and green growth in tourism and foster investment in infrastructure and technology that helps to improve resource efficiency, mitigate climate change and decouple economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation;
9. Governments, the UN system, global and regional financial institutions and the private sector shall cooperate to promote safe, secure and seamless travel and build resilience for tourism by advancing crisis preparedness and management capabilities as well as the full integration of tourism in emergency structures;
10. Governments, the UN system, global and regional financial institutions, academia and the private sector shall support programmes that promote education, capacity building and skills development, particularly related to innovation and technology that create decent jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities, namely for youth, women and least favoured groups;
11. Academia, in partnership with governments, international organizations and private sector shall advance research on Tourism and the SDGs that provides relevant evidence and recommendations on the best policies and business strategies to realize the SDGs through tourism, including adequate necessary financing;
12. All stakeholders shall place the SDGs at the heart of their tourism policies, business strategies, initiatives, projects and research;
13. Governments, private sector, donors and the international and regional organizations shall support the development of a blue economy considering the specificities and vulnerabilities of Islands States in terms of natural resources, impact of climate change and extreme weather events as well as the high reliance of tourism on the ocean for marine activities, transportation, coastal protection and resilience.

14. Caribbean governments and private sector shall work together to advance regional integration through multi-destination tourism by fostering and harmonizing legislation on air connectivity, visa facilitation, product development, promotion and human capital;
15. Governments, private sector, donors and the international and regional organizations shall support the establishment of a Global Tourism Resilience Centre in the Caribbean, including a Sustainable Tourism Observatory, to assist destinations' preparedness, management and recovery of crises which impact tourism and threaten economies and livelihoods.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the devastating hurricanes that affected the Caribbean in recent months and commit to work together towards supporting the recovery of the affected destinations and their people, while building resilience for the Caribbean tourism sector, a pillar of the region's livelihoods.

We express our sincere gratitude to our host, the Government of Jamaica, for its vision and leadership in convening this Conference and for its warm hospitality.

Montego Bay, Jamaica, 29 November 2017