

FIRST UNWTO/ICAO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Tourism and Air Transport in Africa
Santa Maria, Sal Island, Cabo Verde
27 March 2019

Mr. Shanzhong Zhu, UNWTO Executive Director
Guiding Remarks – DAY 1

I am truly honoured to join you here in this beautiful land of subtropical and volcanic islands, world of white sandy beaches, rich culture and unspoiled nature for *The First Ministerial Conference on Tourism and Air Transport, Sal Island, Cabo Verde*.

I wish to thank the Government of Cabo Verde for hosting this Ministerial Conference and giving us the opportunity to look into the future of Tourism and Air Transport in Africa

Excellences, distinguished Ministers of Tourism and Transport, Government of Cabo Verde, ICAO colleagues, Tourism Chiefs, International Organizations representatives and experts on Tourism and Air Transport.

Good morning

Today, against the backdrop of very strong tourism growth, international tourist arrivals in 2018 have broken a record as the second best year since 2010 with a 6% growth which translates to 1.4 billion people moving around the world. Africa has recorded a remarkable growth of 7%, which is the second most important one at the global level.

As recalled in the UNWTO/ICAO Joint Statement on Aviation and Tourism: Hand in Hand for Sustainability, signed in 2013, and in **the Medellín Statement on Tourism and Air Transport for Development**, adopted in 2015, tourism and air transport are major contributors to global economic prosperity, generating numerous socio-economic benefits and spin-offs. The increased connectivity that air transport delivers is at the heart of tourism development and leads to further investment in both sectors. It creates a healthy cycle of economic development in those countries and regions which set out suitable planning and investment commitments.

As highlighted in our 2019 UNWTO VISA OPENNESS REPORT FOR AFRICA, in the past decade, a remarkable facilitation trend can be observed in Africa. While in 2008 a total of 88% of the world population on average needed to obtain a traditional visa to travel to Africa, this has, in 2018, decreased by half to 45%.

The current trend has been as a result of the following dynamics:

- Visa upon arrival at the border and exemption of visa when travelling to Africa.
- Modern information technology advancement that has facilitated processing applications and has significantly influenced visa facilitation policies in Africa by replacing traditional visa through e-Visa and Visa on arrival systems.

Although major advancements have been achieved in both sectors, Africa has a huge tourism and air transport growth potential that remains untapped. This conference will attempt to identify opportunities and challenges that foster the development of connectivity and seamless travel in the African continent. This platform will allow us to put forward pragmatic and viable solutions that will enhance Travel Facilitation, and Funding and Financing for a harmonious and sustainable development of both sectors.

Dear colleagues, as we adopt at the end of our conference a historic Ministerial Declaration on Air Transport and Tourism Development in Africa, as well as adopt the action plan that will guide our future actions with concrete activities to shape the tourism and air transport development in Africa, let us join our efforts and commitments for the sustainable implementation of a:

- Favorable economic environment
- Strong outbound demand from major source markets
- Consolidation of the recovery in key destinations affected by previous crises,
- Enhanced and Better air connectivity
- Increased visa facilitation and above all
- Seamless and Affordable air travel in Africa

The Santa Maria, Sal island Ministerial declaration and action plan comes at a very opportune time to support and consolidate the existing frameworks such as the SAATM for a favorable development of promoting sustainable tourism and seamless travel in Africa.

Thank you dear participants for your presence here today at this conference, and I wish you fruitful discussions on this first day.