

Agenda item 2
Communication of the Chair

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Message of the Chair of the 110th UNWTO Executive Council
H.E. Dr. Charles Romel Banda, Minister of Tourism and Arts, the Republic of Zambia

**Your Excellency, Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Council, Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As Chair of this august body, allow me on behalf of my delegation and indeed all delegations present here, to express sincere gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic Azerbaijan for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to us.

Colleagues,

I welcome you all to this 110th session of the Executive Council in this wonderful historic city of Baku, home of the Palace of the Shirvanshahs, the largest city on the Caspian Sea and of the Caucasus region, renowned for its breath-taking blended scenery. Baku has seen many changes in its existence. Today, the city has emerged as a scientific, cultural, and industrial centre of Azerbaijan, home to a flourishing and vibrant, friendly and hospitable people with a rich cultural heritage. We can now clearly understand why this city is becoming one of Eurasia's most popular tourism destinations and is enjoying enviable growth in international tourist arrivals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and indeed the people of Zambia, home of the mighty Victoria Falls, one of the seven natural wonders of world, I take this opportunity to say how honoured I am to have this opportunity to guide the deliberations of this important gathering. Tourism in my country has been identified as one of the key sectors to contribute to our social-economic emancipation. Therefore, like all of us and all members of the UNWTO we all have a common interest in its survival and continued success.

Distinguished Members of the Council,

Allow me to thank you and all members of our Organization for the solid support you have rendered to our Secretary-General since he took over this position and with your unwavering support, our Secretary-General no doubted has settled in very well. I will also not be doing justice if I don't recognize the dedication to duty, innovation and efficiency put in by the Secretary-General and his team in running the affairs and fulfilling the demanding duties of the Organization thus far.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to remind ourselves on the vision set out by Secretary-General together with his management team and which was unanimously approved by this Council during the 108th session in San Sebastián, Spain. This vision aims at advocating and advancing tourism as a Key

Sector for the 2030 Agenda by ensuring that towards 2030 the tourism industry is developed as a smart, competitive and responsible sector. To achieve this vision, we set ourselves five priorities based on Investing in People for Results Based Management:

Priority Number 1: Innovation and digital transformation

Priority Number 2: Investment and entrepreneurship

Priority Number 3: Education and employment

Priority Number 4: Safe, secure and seamless travel

Priority Number 5: Social, cultural and environmental sustainability

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I harbour no doubt that our approved management priorities fit well in tackling contemporary issues affecting the tourism industry today. For my country, Zambia, we particularly find Priority 3 vital as it is focused on education and employment.

Colleagues,

The growth of the tourism industry and the increasing attention the sector is receiving globally can only be sustained if we have well-educated and trained professionals that will drive the sector and increase its competitiveness. As a labour-intensive industry it is important to recognize the fact that the individual educated for today is soon out of date, the academic emphasis of the programmes in tourism and hospitality is on principles, analytical tools, processes, and systems. These change relatively slowly. However, we must recognize that at least a minimal exposure to the skills and knowledge which make up the present state of the art is necessary to understand the principles.

In this regard, Zambia wishes to applaud the Secretary-General's resolve and determination to strengthen members' capacity in tourism education through the UNWTO Academy and ensure that the industry creates more job opportunities. To this end, Secretary-General, Zambia stands with you on this noble cause.

Distinguished Members of the Council,

In the past four decades we have witnessed the burgeoning expansion and diversification of the tourism industry, unarguably, becoming one of the world's largest industries and a primary economic driver of our recent time. New exotic destinations are constantly coming up, even surpassing the traditional tourist magnets in both North America and Europe. The industry seems to have been blessed with the gift of longevity, and the numbers themselves showcase the fact.

From a mere 277 million international tourists in 1980, to 430 million in 1990, to 680 million in 2000, 983 million in 2010, and crossing the billion figure in 2012, tourists keep on travelling in multitudes and increasing exponentially by the year despite many challenges and setbacks. In 2018 international tourist arrivals reported by destinations around the world totalled 1.4 billion (+6%), consolidating 2017's strong results and proving to be the second strongest year since 2010. Tourism continues to grow and has proven to be a strong and resilient social-economic activity and a significant contributor to economic development in many of our countries. Recently, tourism has been reported and acknowledged to be a global sector that provides a job for one in nine workers worldwide. In many of our member states, tourism employs a large percentage of our labour force.

Due to its continued exponential growth, we must be cognizant of the need for even greater emphasis on sustainability. This is essential to ensure long-term economic gains that provide benefits to all socio-economic groups and across other sectors through strong partnership linkages. As Zambia, we view sustainability as a result of a world shared-view which sees the

survival, progress, and continued maintenance of human community as dependent on the sustained health and viability of the earth's life support systems.

Sustainability implies a process of fundamental change in our social institutional systems and individual actions. The drive of this change relates to addressing the challenges embedded in the new global awareness that the earth is finite, and all the planet's life support systems including environmental social and economic are globally interconnected and interdependent. Therefore, we must explore the creation of more robust sustainability indicators that accurately measure socio-economic and environmental benefits to local communities. Equally, we must develop critical national awareness of the ways in which tourism can improve the quality of life and welfare of all our citizens. In other words, we must practise responsible tourism.

Colleagues,

Equally important is collaboration through public-private sector partnerships and strengthening stakeholder engagement at all levels to ensure compliance and active support of regulations and initiatives designed to develop a sustainable tourism industry. Moreover, we must ensure that in all our destinations tourism policies and plans emphasize the full and meaningful involvement of local communities. The success of tourism development depends on the good will and the cooperation of the local community. If local community aspirations and capabilities do not match with tourism development and planning, it may destroy the industry's potential. Therefore, local community involvement should be at the centre of any tourism destination development programmes.

Distinguished Members of the Council,

As we deliberate during this session, let us measure the progress we have made thus far on delivering on these priorities we set for ourselves.

And as I conclude my remarks, may I personally invite you to explore this historic and blended city of Baku. Let us take time to stroll its streets, take delight in its sea views, discover its culture, taste its unparalleled gastronomy and, above all, enjoy the warmth and hospitality of its people.

I THANK YOU
