



Seventy-fourth session
Salvador do Bahia, Brazil, 2-3 December 2004
Provisional agenda item 2

COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIRMAN

Note by the Secretary-General

In this document, the Secretary-General submits the communication of the Chairman of the Executive Council for the consideration of its Members.

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1. I consider my communication as somewhat symbolic, as we are drawing the conclusion of a two-year chairmanship of the Russian Federation in the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization. Although it was a challenging period for global tourism, Russia is deeply satisfied with having had an opportunity to work at this responsible position in a climate of cooperation and solidarity.
2. On behalf of the WTO Executive Council I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Government of Brazil and personally to Mr. Walfrido Dos Mares, Tourism Minister of this great tourism country, for their kind invitation to hold this session of our governing body in optimal conditions and in a climate of warm hospitality.
3. I consider very relevant today's agenda, which obliges us to take rational decisions and approaches. It is worth noting that during the current year 2004, global tourism has seen a recovery from the difficulties it first experienced in 2001 and then continued in many destinations in the past three years. Tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon has become an intrinsic need of the mankind. In my country, Russia, tourism has been developing at a stable and dynamic pace, and its role is now better understood, which is confirmed by the fact that the new national tourism administration has been constituted as a separate agency reporting directly to the national government.
4. Our Institution, thanks to the accession of Australia, counts with 144 member States, and we are expecting its further expansion. In view of complex and large-scale developments in the world tourism market, we note WTO's market analysis activities. The World Tourism Barometer has become a tool to monitor market trends. At the same time, it is advisable that WTO should develop operative guidelines for governments and other stakeholders regarding market trends by sectors, regions and even individual countries.
5. The authority of our Organization has risen after its transformation into a specialized agency of the United Nations, and this adds to our responsibility. The new status of WTO has consolidated its intergovernmental character, and in this regard, we are awaiting with interest proposals of the Working Group of the Council, charged with preparing amendments to the WTO Statutes.
6. This Council has before it a set of documents on the implication of WTO's transformation into a specialized agency, and I believe that we should give a green light to new rules to ensure the smooth functioning of our Organization as part and parcel of the United Nations family.
7. An important issue, on which our Council should pronounce its view, is the painful issue of travel advisories. The proposed ten WTO guidelines are clear and concise, and they may serve as a basis and a "yardstick" for developing travel advisories. National governments and, in particular, their ministries of foreign affairs, should be persuaded to adhere to these guidelines when developing their advisories. This, on the one hand, will help ensure consumers' right to honest and unbiased information while, on the other hand, prevent unjustified damage to destinations' tourism economies.

8. I should like to conclude by expressing, on behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation, deep gratitude to all the Executive Council members for their support and understanding which they showed by electing my country to the Council chairmanship in 2003 and 2004. Finally, I assure all the WTO members that Russia will continue to work together with the World Tourism Organization for the benefit of global tourism as a force for social and economic progress.

