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Membership of the Organization

(a) New membership

I. Full members

1. The purpose of this document is to inform the General Assembly on the changes in membership since its eighteenth session and to submit to it membership applications that it is called upon to consider pursuant to Article 5 of the Statutes and rules 49 and 50 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure.

I. CANDIDATURE FOR MEMBERSHIP

2. The Secretariat and the Spanish Government received on 2 August 2011, in the required form, the application of **Liberia** for admission to the UNWTO. Pursuant to Article 5(3) of the Statutes, this application is submitted to this session of the General Assembly. This State is a Member of the United Nations.

II. WITHDRAWALS

3. **Canada** notified the Secretariat and the Spanish Government on 20 May 2011 of its intention to withdraw from the Organization (on the expiry of one year's notice, Article 35 of the Statutes) effective on May 2012. The Secretary-General is taking all the necessary steps to encourage Canada to reconsider its position, especially in view of the changes in the Canadian Government that occurred recently. The Secretary-General will inform the Members of the outcome of these efforts.

III. CONTACT WITH NON-MEMBER STATES

4. The Secretary-General and Regional Directors have been in touch with the following countries in order to inform them of, or to recall, the benefits of UNWTO membership and to encourage them to consider joining or resuming their participation in the Organization.

5. The past two years have witnessed a continuous *rapprochement* between the **United Arab Emirates** and UNWTO, with contacts with the Organization intensifying at both federal and local levels, particularly since the creation of the *National Council for Tourism and Antiquities (NCTA)*, in February 2010.

6. The Director General of the Council has recently confirmed to the Secretary-General the decision of the **UAE** Government in reapplying for full membership of the Organization and in solving the issue of contribution arrears accumulated before its withdrawal from the Organization, in April 1987.

The UAE application for membership is expected to be forthcoming for submission to the General at its present session.

7. Within the European region, several meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of **Sweden, Finland, Estonia** and **Ireland** took place. In addition, official visits to Finland, Estonia and Ireland were organized. During these official visits, meetings with representatives of the public and private tourism stakeholders were held and issues of common concern as well as membership discussed.

8. The Regional Programme for the Americas has been in direct conversations with **Belize** and the **United States of America**. In the first case, RPAM met with Belize Minister of Tourism, Manuel Heredia, during WTM in London in November 2010 and FITUR in Madrid in January 2011. Subsequent to those meetings, a follow-up letter was sent to the Minister detailing the type of services and benefits offered by UNWTO and the annual contribution that would correspond to Belize. An invitation was also extended to the Minister to attend the Regional Commission meeting in Paraguay as observers.

9. The Regional Director for the Americas travelled to Washington to meet officials from the US Administration (Department of Commerce and Department of State). The meetings were also attended by the Minister of Jamaica in his capacity of representative in the Executive Council of the English speaking countries in the Americas. During the meetings the reasons for USA's withdrawal in 1995 were discussed and the officials were presented with a description of those areas of the program of work of the Organisation considered of interest for them, such as: risk & crisis management, technical assistance to less developed countries, security and travel facilitation, Tourism Satellite Accounts among others. They expressed high interest in our activities and their interventions were quite positive regarding a possible re-entry. The decision, however, has to be approved by the US Congress.

10. There has also been specific correspondence exchanged with two other countries: **Saint Kitts & Nevis** and **Barbados**, who showed interest in considering joining UNWTO. Information on benefits and annual contributions were sent to both countries and we are waiting for their responses.

11. As far as the Asia-Pacific region is concerned, **Singapore** and **New Zealand** have been the focus of the Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific. A series of meetings have taken place with the Chief Executive of Singapore Tourism Board – Ms. Aw Kah Peng on the occasion of WTM 2010, ITB Berlin and ASEAN Tourism Forum 2011 as well as in Madrid. Discussions have been held on strengthening bilateral relations with Singapore, inviting them to attend UNWTO events and most importantly, to join the Organization as a full member.

12. The Secretary-General is scheduled to participate in the Asia Travel Leaders' Summit in Singapore in October 2011. On the same occasion, UNWTO in collaboration with Singapore Tourism Board will organize a special informal meeting of selected high-level tourism representatives. It will be similar to the informal gathering that preceded the Global Tourism Forum in Andorra last March.

13. In the case of **New Zealand**, the Secretariat extended another invitation to the Embassy in Madrid for UNWTO's Annual Gathering of Asia-Pacific Ambassadors' lunch which the Regional Programme for Asia organized in February. As one of the most developed countries in the region in the compilation of tourism statistics and the development of tourism satellite account (TSA), New Zealand has partnered with UNWTO as part of the technical support in the organization of the 2-year UNWTO Statistics Capacity-building Programme for Asia and the Pacific. They have already supported us in the first two workshops which took place in Bangkok in November 2010 and Manila in July 2011 respectively, and are ready to join us for the last workshop scheduled for the beginning of next year.

IV. PRESENT MEMBERSHIP

14. At the date of this document, the total number of member States of the Organization is 154. Should the General Assembly approve Liberia's candidature to full membership, the total number would therefore come to 155 member States.