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Communication of the Chair

Message of the Chair of the 100th UNWTO Executive Council Honourable Dr. Wykeham McNeill, Minister of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica

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

I welcome you to the 100th session of the Executive Council of the UNWTO in this wonderful historic city renowned for its breathtaking scenery. Rovinj has seen many changes in its two and a half centuries of existence. Today, it has emerged as home to a flourishing and vibrant people with a rich culture. We can see clearly why it is now one of the most popular tourism destinations and is enjoying enviable growth in visitor arrivals.

On behalf of all delegations, let me express sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Croatia for the warm welcome extended to us.

I take this opportunity to say how honoured I am to represent my country, Jamaica, as we enjoy the distinction of being the first English-speaking Caribbean country and possibly the smallest, to be entrusted to guide the deliberations of this august body. Tourism is one of the most important industries in Jamaica and the highest earner of foreign exchange as in many of your countries – large and small. We all have a common interest in its survival and continued success.

I thank the Secretariat of the World Tourism Organization and, personally, the Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, for his dedication, innovation and efficiency in fulfilling his demanding duties so that the UNWTO can discharge the tremendous responsibilities of this important Organization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past few years, tourism has proven to be a strong and resilient economic activity and a significant contributor to the global recovery. International tourist arrivals reported by destinations around the world reached 1,138 million in 2014, a 4.7% increase over the previous year.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the world's largest industry, tourism reportedly provides a job for one in nine workers worldwide. In many of our member nations it employs a large percentage of our labour force. We are cognizant of the need for even greater emphasis on sustainability. This is essential to ensure long-term economic gains that provide benefits to all socioeconomic groups and across other sectors through strong promotion of linkages. Equally important is collaboration with private-sector stakeholders to ensure compliance and active support of regulations and initiatives designed to preserve our natural and built environment. We must ensure that community tourism efforts emphasize meaningful involvement at the grassroots. In addition to financial performance, we must explore the creation of more robust sustainability indicators that accurately measure socioeconomic 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.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before we leave this beautiful country, let us all take the opportunity to see some of the interesting sights that this jewel by the Adriatic Sea has to offer. Let us embark on a journey of personal discovery, however short, of what so many discerning visitors have come to enjoy.

I thank Croatia, the Secretariat and its helpful staff for their preparatory work for what I am confident will prove a successful and enlightening session of the Executive Council of the UNWTO under my Chairmanship.

Thank you.