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### Communication of the Chair

#### Message of the Chair of the 103rd UNWTO Executive Council Honourable Yehia Rashed, Minister of Tourism, Egypt

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

It is a pleasure to attend the 103rd session of the Executive Council of the UNWTO in the wonderful historic city of Málaga. On behalf of all delegations, let me express sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Spain for the warm welcome extended to us.

I also would like to 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.

It is my pleasure and honour to represent my country, Egypt, the cradle of civilizations, and I am looking forward to welcome all of you in Luxor, which will host the UNWTO's 5th Global Summit of City Tourism. We will be honoured to showcase the beauty of Egypt's tourist destinations, our unique cultural heritage and, above all, the kindness and warmth of Egyptian people.

Over the past few years, tourism has proven to be a strong and resilient economic activity and a significant contributor to the global recovery. As one of the world's largest industries, tourism provides one in eleven jobs around the world. It contributes directly and indirectly to 10 percent of the global GDP.

According to the World Tourism Organization UNWTO demand for the international tourism remained strong in 2015. The number of international tourists (overnight visitors) reached 1,184 million, 50 million more than in 2014, with an increase of 4.4%. This was the sixth consecutive year of above-average growth since the 2009 global economic crisis. Additionally, more than 6 billion domestic tourism trips took place last year.

As for outbound tourism as measured by international tourism expenditure, available data for 2015 indicates that a few leading source markets, namely China, the USA and the UK, drove tourism expenditure in 2015 supported by their strong currencies and economies. Tourism, thus, accounts for



10% of global GDP, generates 30% of the world's trade in services and provides for one in eleven jobs worldwide.

UNWTO forecasts international tourist arrivals to grow between 3.5% and 4.5% in view of current trends and the results from the UNWTO Confidence Index, which remain largely positive for 2016, though at a slightly lower level as compared to the previous. By 2030, the number of international tourists is expected to reach 1.8 billion.

Yet these big numbers represent more than just economic strength—they reflect tourism's vast potential and increasing capacity to address some of the world's most pressing challenges, including economic growth, inclusive development, resource management, biodiversity conservation and environmental preservation. Built around the millions of cross-cultural encounters happening every day around the world, tourism can also be a gateway to greater understanding of the world.

The growth in international tourism receipts in 2015 is expected to have followed that of arrivals fairly closely (the 2015 results for international tourism receipts will be released at the end of April 2016). The United Nations (UN) General Assembly approved the adoption of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. More information is available in document CE/103/3(d), and the steering committee met on Monday.

In many of our member nations, tourism represents millions, if not billions, of dollars in economic activity. It supports exports from large companies, and generates local economic opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Tourism truly has a top-down and bottom-up economic effect. It allows the world's leading companies, from airlines to hotel groups to package holiday companies, to grow and expand, bringing new products and offerings to people around the world. It also provides the small hotel owners, tour operators and shop keepers the ability to own a business and achieve their dreams.

I believe we must be more vocal about the benefits tourism provides to our countries and the world. We should be proud of our contributions and make sure they are recognized by the leaders of our governments and by the heads of our largest companies. Because we do not manufacture large goods, or extract huge resources, it may be easy to forget about us. But the tourism industry constructs many of the world's iconic structures, capturing the imagination with beauty in the form of buildings. We move hundreds of millions of people around the world each year. And we have been pioneers in the use of technology to provide better services to customers, having made the world accessible through apps, social media and virtual reality.

The best part of tourism is that it provides a sense of joy to our visitors. I mentioned that visiting Egypt is to experience history with the five senses. Increasingly our guests expect this—they want to be amazed, entertained, and excited. Our challenge is to provide them these moments in a way that connects with them through all their senses. The taste of Egypt's fine food. The smell of the salty sea air along the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.

The sound of vibrant music in the streets of Cairo. The cool, rough feel of stones in the pyramids, put in place thousands of years ago. The sight of the vibrant green Nile River Delta, such a contrast from our deserts and mountains.

In Egypt, I am determined for us to be even more ambitious. Tourism contributes more than 10 percent of our GDP. It is one of our most important industries. In 2014-2015, despite the crisis Tourism faced, it still contributes to the Egyptian economy as one of the principal generators of income and foreign exchange earnings around 11.3 % of GDP directly and indirectly, provides a share of 11.7 % of foreign

currency and 33.5 % of the total services exports. 73% of the tourism investments is provided by the private sector where considered 2 % of the total investment in Egypt and 18% of the service sector investments. It also contributes to the budget with 19% of the direct taxes on services, and 4.5 % of the total direct sales tax.

As a labour-intensive sector, it represents 12.6% of the total employment, where 1.8 million work directly in tourism industries (in hotels, restaurants, tourism companies, cultural services, bazaars, safari, etc.), in addition to 2.2 million workers in other tourism-related sectors (transport, sports, recreation, entertainment, and self-owned accommodations establishments)

After a difficult six months, we have taken action to restore tourism to Egypt. In early April, I launched my "Tourism Impact Plan", focusing on six main priorities to improve Egyptian tourism to deliver real and impactful results within six months. These six themes are:

1. A New Partnership
2. Bring the World to Egypt
3. Innovation and Investment
4. Upgraded product and service levels
5. Attract International Investment
6. A Future in Green Tourism

In addition, we are investing in measures to enhance airport security, to ensure all visitors have a safe, enjoyable experience when travelling to, from or within Egypt. We have worked closely with international delegations to implement new best practices, and have hired Control Risks, a world-leading security and risk advisory company, to assess and further strengthen airport security. As rightly pointed out by the High-Level meeting on Tourism and Security, held in Madrid last January, the current situation is a global problem and, as such, requires a global response. I very much look forward to our discussions of this important issue on Wednesday.

The Tourism Impact Plan is specifically tailored to Egypt, but many of its pillars are relevant to all of our countries. Closer collaboration between government and business, continual innovation to create new offerings, and meeting higher levels of quality and service all need to be the standard for our industry. I look forward to sharing our best practices with you, and hope to learn from your own successes.

I would again like to thank our gracious hosts in the beautiful country of Spain; the Secretary-General of the UNWTO for his leadership, and the staff of the UNWTO for their wonderful spirit and great coordination of the Executive Council.

Even though we are all competitors, together we can support each other to be even better. The year ahead may bring new challenges, but I am excited for us to seize the opportunities ahead of us. Together I am confident we can make 2016 a memorable and successful year for all of us.