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Communication of the Chair

Message of the Chair of the 108th UNWTO Executive Council Honourable José Gustavo Santos, Minister of Tourism, Argentina

Your Excellency Secretary-General,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Council,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In my capacity as Chairman of this Executive Council and on behalf of the Government of the Argentine Republic, I am pleased to welcome you to this 108th session of the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Government of the Kingdom of Spain for receiving us in this beautiful city of San Sebastian. I would like to personally invite you to explore its history in the magic of its streets, to take delight in its sea views, to discover its culture by tasting its incomparable gastronomy and, above all, to enjoy the warmth and hospitality of the Spanish people who are welcoming us here today.

I would also like to express my most sincere thanks and special regards to the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, Mr Zurab POLOLIKASHVILI. It is, dear friend, and will be, an honour for this Executive Council to accompany you in the responsibility you have taken on with regard to each and every one of its Members. We are aware that there is much to be done, but we are deeply convinced that if we work together it will be easier to achieve our goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Back in 2009, when pessimism reigned regarding the future of the global economy, the tourism sector faced the situation like no other. Its capacity for development sped up the recovery and fostered the growth that has continued ever since. And in 2012 we were able to celebrate 1 billion international tourists.



Since then, growth has never ceased and we can expect in 2018 to exceed the 2017 figure of 1.322 billion. It is also our responsibility to ensure that respect for destinations is a condition for tourism in the future. Our sector must help achieve the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Dear friends,

There will doubtless be difficulties ahead. But you can be sure that the World Tourism Organization and, especially, the vision of our dear Secretary-General, will guide us in consolidating responsible, sustainable, innovative and inclusive tourism.

We must make tourism a political priority, by including it in national, regional and international agendas so that it can play a stronger role in the policies and governance structures of institutions. We must also promote cross-cutting governmental coordination to achieve effective tourism development and on-going dialogue with the private sector and with other social agents involved in our activity.

We also have to promote tourism as an essential tool for generating jobs and life opportunities for millions of people the world over.

Through the Ministry that I lead and with the support of the Argentine Presidency of the G-20 and the collaboration of the World Tourism Organization, in April of this year we held the 8th meeting of Tourism Ministers of the G-20 economies. On that occasion, we discussed the role of tourism in sustainable development and its consequent contribution to job creation.

Dear friends, it is along these lines that we must work. Today, tourism provides one out of every ten jobs worldwide and this will grow in the future. It also reaches people of all ages and educational levels, empowering some of the most socially and economically vulnerable groups and reaching every corner of our planet.

We therefore have to develop knowledge of tourism in order to strengthen the formulation and adoption of public policies that are in line with the current needs of the sector. It is not only necessary to encourage the sharing of information and good practices among ourselves but also, under the leadership of UNWTO, to agree on and draw up recommendations and international standards that will guide us in our decisions.

We have to step up dialogue with our Organization so that we can participate in the definition of the services offered to its Members to ensure that they meet our needs. We also have to support a new strategic vision that identifies current priorities, such as innovation, the digital economy, smart destinations, investment, local development and small and medium tourism enterprises. By doing so, we shall not only consolidate the participation of existing Members but will also attract new Members to the Organization.

Finally, we should strengthen the Organization's budgetary capacity so that we can achieve these goals, making greater efforts to guarantee the financial sustainability of UNWTO.

(...)

Ladies and gentlemen,

In compliance with the mandate of the Twenty-Second General Assembly, it is our responsibility to draw up the General Programme of Work and Budget for 2018-2019 in line with the following priorities established by our Organization:

- To develop tourism intelligence through innovation and digital transformation;
- To increase the competitive advantages of our sector by means of investment and entrepreneurship;
- To create more and better jobs, developing educational tools to promote employment;
- To build up resilience and facilitate travel, making them safer and more fluid; and,
- To protect tourism heritage as a factor for social, cultural and environmental sustainability.

Dear friends,

None of us present here today, in our capacity as representatives, are detached from the future of our communities and of mankind in general.

If travel makes us better people because we learn to meet others, to interact in different cultural settings, to respect environmental heritage, to value identities and even to love, then, if this is true, tourism will make the world a better place.

In this mission, let us step up our efforts to work more closely together and with a greater commitment than ever before.

I trust that the deliberations of this Executive Council will achieve maximum success.

Thank you very much.