

WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION

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**COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIRMAN**

**Note by the Secretary-General**

In this document the Members of the Council will find the communication of the Chairman.

### **COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIRMAN**

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Representatives of the Member States,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin my remarks by thanking the people of Mali for having invited us to this African land and for the warm welcome they have given us.

It is an honour for me to address you on this occasion, which gathers together those of us who, through some facet of our duties, have striven to meet the challenge of blazing new paths that make it possible to develop our countries through such an emblematic activity for the welfare of our people as tourism.

The Secretary-General ad interim of the World Tourism Organization, Taleb Rifai, has given us an excellent report on the situation of tourism in the world and of the Organization since our last meeting in Madrid.

Tourism is a wealth-generating activity that has the wonderful particularity of spreading its benefits among the greater part of our populations. This activity has been an opportunity for growth for all peoples, especially for those of us in the process of development.

Even though we are going through a period of financial crisis that has affected the tourism sector, rather than weakening us, this situation has made us stronger by encouraging unity and dialogue among countries and regions, making us even closer to the UNWTO and to other international bodies that seek to work with the States in concrete actions aimed at mitigating the specific problems of each territory. It is important to highlight the important role of the UNWTO at the last G20 meeting, where the Secretary-General urged leaders to include tourism as an essential factor in economic stimulus programmes and in the new pact for a "green" economy. Because tourism is an industry that creates jobs and is one of the principal export services in developing economies, the Secretary-General also called upon the leaders of the private sector and of other tourism and multilateral organizations to develop regional and national stimulus and rescue plans for this industry. I urge the States and the UNWTO to continue this process of coordination and assistance to the States even beyond the present situation, so that we might have a permanent forum for consultation and for the exchange of experiences that enriches all the member countries and their inhabitants.

Sustainable development policy should be the fundamental axis of tourism activity. Sustainability has shown us the appropriate way for the growth of this activity in a manner that is planned, orderly, and above all, in harmony with nature. But today, the challenge is greater and obliges other countries, for the good of humanity, to take responsible actions in order to counteract the effects of climate change.

In developing countries, efforts to mitigate climate change have to be carried out in the context of the need to fight poverty and achieve sustainable development. For this reason, I wish to call for the resumption of the effort made several years back by the UNWTO to include as part of the excellent work it already does with the tourism Barometer, sustainability indicators that show the effort each State is making in response to this universal challenge for the planet.

The President of Costa Rica, Dr. Oscar Arias Sánchez, has pointed out that in order to survive the 21st century, we need a different ethic from that of the past, one that recognizes our interdependence and understands that we are all responsible for one another; without such an ethic, economic globalization will only aggravate the hardships of our species.

It is precisely in the face of the need for this different ethic that tourism should speak out for these necessary changes in order to safeguard not only the future of the industry, but also the future of our peoples. In 1999, the World Tourism Organization laid down the foundations for the creation of a collective ethic by promulgating the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and by forming the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, which, I am pleased to announce, will be meeting for the first time in the Americas in our country on 18 and 19 June of this year. It is important to recall that the Committee does not only consider specific issues regarding ethics; in addition, at the request of interested parties, it can also function as a consultative or conciliatory body. I urge all the Member States to promote the text of the Code and to inform about the functions of the Committee.

To conclude, I just want to take this opportunity to invite all countries to join the movement for ethics in tourism so that it can lead us to the construction of peace among all human beings and with nature, through instruments that ensure the sustainable development and reinforcement of tourism everywhere and for the benefit of all.

Thank you.