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Report of the Secretary-General

Part I: Current situation and activities

(b) Mainstreaming tourism in the global agenda

I. Introduction

1. The Secretariat continued to work determinedly in advocating tourism's contribution to economic growth and sustainable development in order **to move the sector higher on the international and national political and economic agendas** and obtain the necessary policy support for its sustained growth.

II. Mainstreaming tourism in the international and national agendas

2. The '**Global Leaders for Tourism**' campaign has advanced substantially during 2012 and 2013. The campaign, a joint initiative by UNWTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), comprises the presentation of an Open Letter to Heads of State and Government worldwide, seeking their acknowledgement of the relevance of tourism in facing today's global challenges and their support for policies that stimulate the growth of the sector. Between 28 February 2011, when President Felipe Calderón of Mexico first received the Open Letter, and the **end of March 2013, 48 leaders joined the Campaign.**

3. **Travel facilitation, taxation and connectivity** have been identified as **key policy issues** to be addressed during 2012-2013. In this regard, the following work has been carried out by the Secretariat.

- (a) **Travel facilitation:** Following the important reference made to tourism and to the role of visa facilitation in stimulating growth and jobs in the Declaration of the G20 Leaders (June 2012), UNWTO has continued to advocate for visa facilitation as means to grow the tourism sector.

The issue was the theme of the 2012 UNWTO/WTM Ministers' Summit in London and the object of a dedicated debate at the 94th session of the Executive Council, which mandated the Secretariat to "maintain visa facilitation as a priority in the work of the Secretariat and advance it through advocacy at the highest political level and the identification and



dissemination of case studies” and to do so “in close cooperation with other international and regional organizations” (CE/DEC/20(XCIV).

In this respect, and to support its advocacy work, UNWTO has published in January 2013, an in-depth report on the current “openness” of each world region in terms of visas for tourism

(http://dtxtg4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_visa_facilitation.pdf).

UNWTO is also working with WTTC to conduct an evaluation of the impact of visa facilitation on tourism in the economies of APEC, similar to the one produced for the G20 (to be finalized by September 2013) and with OECD in the identification of case studies and the setting of joint recommendations with a view to organizing an International Conference on Travel Facilitation in 2014.

- (b) **Taxation:** The Secretariat continues to advocate for intelligent taxation, raising awareness of the need to evaluate the overall economic impact of the raising or introduction of new taxes on travel and tourism. In this regard, a pilot project on a possible econometric model to assess the impact of changes in fiscal policies in tourism is under way in cooperation with WTTC.
- (c) **Connectivity:** Considering that 51% of all international tourists arrive to their destinations by air, the Secretariat has also started to work on the promotion of connectivity, particularly in terms of air transport, with the aim of raising awareness at the international level of the importance of a closer relationship between tourism and aviation as to ensure mutual benefits. In this respect, the UNWTO Secretary-General addressed the member states of the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) at ICAO’s Sixth Worldwide Air Transport Conference (March 2013) highlighting issues such as the need to review the current legislative framework, taxation, climate change and consumer protection, and appealing for increased cooperation between aviation and tourism both at national and international level.

4. Further to the above, the Secretariat continued to focus on advancing the issue of **consumer protection** as well as the overall arching priority of UNWTO’s work, **sustainability**. The latter has been addressed through various initiatives in the areas of research, training, technical assistance and support to the setting of Sustainable Tourism Observatories in China and Greece.

5. The Secretariat also continued to work within the **UN system** and with **other international and regional organizations** such as regional development banks **to move tourism higher on the sustainable development agenda**. In this regard, it is important to highlight UNWTO’s engagement in the post Rio+20 UN processes and stress the following collaborations: the UNWTO-led UN Steering Committee on Tourism for Development, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism (GPST), the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), which will from 2013 onwards be located within the premises of the UNWTO Headquarters in Madrid, the ongoing participation of the Organization in the Spanish MDG Fund projects and the cooperation with UNESCO on several tourism and culture programmes, including the World Heritage Tourism Programme, among many others.

III. Actions to be taken by the Executive Council

6. The Executive Council is requested:
- (a) to note the work of the Secretariat in mainstreaming tourism in the international and national agendas; and
 - (b) to commend the Members which have joined the Open Letter initiative and encourage those which have not yet to do so.