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Communication of the Chair

Message of the Chair of the UNWTO Executive Council
Honourable Sapta Nirwandar, Vice Minister for Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia

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

Let me begin my speech by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Spain for its continuous support and generosity granted to the World Tourism Organization and its Members in hosting the 98th session of the Executive Council, meeting in this beautiful and heritage city of Santiago de Compostela. My special appreciation also goes to the Mayor of the City of Santiago de Compostela, Mr. Angel Curras Fernandez, for his contribution to ensure excellent hospitality for all delegations.

I would also like to address special gratitude to the Secretariat of the World Tourism Organization, personally to the Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, for his leadership, work and excellent cooperation, so we can successfully fulfil the mandate entrusted to us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all know that tourism has significant impact on the economic recovery and growth, and high potential in the global economy. International tourist arrivals reached a record of 1.087 billion arrivals in 2013, increasing 5% from 1.035 billion in 2012. The growth of arrivals at the end of 2013 exceeded our expectations in a time of global economic challenges. Asia and the Pacific as well as Africa dominated the growth of international tourists with 6%. This number is followed by the European region with 5%, while the Southeast Asian region was the leading destination with an increase of 10%. The tourism performance shows that the tourism sector has a remarkable capacity to adjust itself to a changing market situation, and at the same time fuelling growth and job creation around the world. This year (2014) we are very optimistic, if we have a look at the UNWTO forecast of growth of between 4% and 4.5%, the forecast again surpasses the long-term projections.

The excellent performance of this industry also always comes with some challenges to make it sustained. Firstly, we all need to seriously work towards realizing the mandate of the UNWTO, which is to ensure its sustainable development. International tourism growth has to be able to drive concern of



the member countries towards the development of sustainable tourism and commit ourselves to make tourism as part of the Sustainable Development Goals or Post-2015 Agenda.

As we are all aware, sustainable development is a must. Tourism has played and will continue to play an important role in the process to achieve this objective. I am proudly saying that UNWTO, together with some Member States, such as Indonesia, Rep. of Korea and Morocco, has actively participated in the UN Experts Group Meeting on Sustainable Tourism, held in October 2013. The outcome of this important meeting was our proposal to inaugurate the year of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism. This step is to demonstrate how tourism can play not only an important but also a critical role in developing the world economy by creating jobs and alleviating poverty. Moreover, tourism with its people-to-people contact characteristics, can contribute to social and cultural development. It is the UNWTO's and the Member States' responsibility to work together and to show the world how tourism can be developed sustainably.

Secondly, travel and tourism are now increasingly recognized as "human rights". It is clearly stated in Articles 7 and 8 of the Global Code of Ethics. Therefore it is necessary for us to continue working on efforts to fulfil rights such as facilitating visas, protecting consumers/tourists, and relaxing tax at the national, regional, and international levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last but not least, the idea of travel facilitation is not just related to human rights fulfilment but also has a solid correlation with the Organization's effort to develop new thematic tourism products aiming to foster regional development and integration through tourism. One of them is the Silk Road Initiative. It requires connectivity and needs cohesive support from the Members to make travel easier and more convenient. We appreciate the effort of the Secretariat in establishing the UNWTO Silk Road Task Force to work on this issue. Hopefully, the same idea would spread to other thematic and regional initiatives such as the Silk Road, the spice road, the maritime silk route, Danube river development, and so on. When the initiatives spread, I do believe that we have to think to unite all task forces into one bigger umbrella.

In the next debate session, we will discuss the above-mentioned idea. I am expecting active participation from you to share experience and knowledge in managing and developing tourism to support regional development. Again, I call for your engagement and full participation in this session including to present issues from your various countries that will help the Organization to effectively deliver its mandate.

Before closing my speech, let me remind all of you that the theme of World Tourism Day 2014 is "Tourism and Development in the Community" and will be celebrated in Mexico. I hope member countries support Mexico in celebrating the WTD. For countries unable to join with Mexico, please create any events to celebrate. The WTD is very important for us to increase the awareness among the international community of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic value.

Before all delegations leave this lovely country, I believe that you must spend time to explore the beauty and uniqueness of El Camino de Santiago, which is popularly known as "the Famous Pilgrimage" in Spain, and even in the world. I thank you all and especially the Secretariat for the support shown to ensure the success of my chairmanship.