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### Communication of the Chair

#### Message of the Chair of the 99th UNWTO Executive Council Honourable Mari Elka Pangestu, Minister for Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia

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

I take this opportunity to welcome you to the 99th session of the Executive Council of the UNWTO, in the beautiful and historic city of Samarkand. This city is the crossroads of world culture, with a history of over two-and-a-half millennia. Let me, on behalf of all delegations, express my sincere gratitude to the Government and thank the people of Uzbekistan for welcoming us with warm and excellent hospitality. We are in a really beautiful tourism destination, very well known all over the world.

I would also like to express my 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 fulfill the mandate entrusted to us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us begin by briefly reviewing the performance of the tourism sector. The number of people crossing international borders is rapidly increasing, as seen in the first four months of this year; International tourist arrivals reached 317 million, 14 million more than in the same period of 2013. This means an increase of 5%, the same rate as during the full year 2013.

Even though the aviation industry has experienced some unfortunate disasters this year, we are still very optimistic; the forecast for growth of tourism travel will again surpass the UNWTO long-term projections of 4% and 4.5%.

On this occasion, allow me to convey my heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the unfortunate disasters and accidents. We express our sincerest sympathy for the passengers' families and friends at this difficult time. I am sure the countries affected by these tragedies will be able to recover both their aviation and tourism industries. I appeal to member countries to continually support them. I appreciate the quick response of Mr. Taleb Rifai, on behalf of the Organization, who reiterated the call of the UN Secretary-General for a full international investigation.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cultural assets are now becoming important to tourism. Cultural tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing segments in the global tourism markets. Culture and creative industries are increasingly being used to promote tourism destinations and are able to increase tourism competitiveness and attractiveness. Many countries are now actively developing their cultural assets, both tangible and intangible, in order to develop their comparative advantages in an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace. Cultural assets are also able to create local distinctiveness in the globalization era. The impact of culture on tourism inspires us to create a concept of how to maximize the use of culture for tourism development.

We appreciate the effort of the Secretariat in this important meeting in proposing, as one of the agenda items, to invite all delegations to discuss the relation between tourism and culture. I am expecting active participation from all of you and encourage you to share your experience and knowledge in managing and developing cultural tourism. Hopefully, the discussion can result in the creation of a partnership model between culture and tourism. Again, I call for your engagement and full participation in this session and invite you to present issues from your various countries, which will help the UNWTO to effectively deliver on its mandate.

We all have to be committed to work towards realizing the mandate of the UNWTO, to ensure the sustainable development of the tourism sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before all delegations leave this lovely country, I believe that we will have time to spend as tourists and to explore and enjoy the beauty and uniqueness of Samarkand. I thank you all and especially the Secretariat for the support shown to ensure the success of my chairmanship.