



## **UNWTO Commission for Europe**

Sixty-first meeting

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Item 2 of the Provisional agenda

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#### COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIRPERSON

#### **Note by the Secretary-General**

In this document, the Chairperson of the Commission for Europe presents to its Members his remarks on the activities of Switzerland as Chair, insights on Switzerland's tourism policy as well as his comments on the UNWTO programme of work for Europe for the period 2018-2019.

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## **COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIRMAN**

1. Honoured Secretary General of the UNWTO, honoured minister, dear colleagues and members of the UNWTO Commission for Europe.
2. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our host, the Government of the Republic of Moldova. It is a great honour to be welcomed in this wonderful country and experience the outstanding hospitality of the Moldavian people. We are all looking forward to our stay here in Chisinau. Thank you once again to the organisers.
3. I am greatly honoured to continue to act as the Chair of the UNWTO Commission for Europe in the name of the Swiss people. I perceived our collaboration in the CEU since our last meeting in Vilnius as inspiring and fruitful.
4. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the UNWTO Secretariat, and particularly Isabel Garaña and Christopher Imbsen and their team, for the excellent cooperation and support. Isabel and Christopher campaign vigorously for the interests of the European member states within UNWTO and it is a pleasure to work with them.

## **Activities of Switzerland in its role as Chair of the CEU**

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5. Switzerland has set itself three targets in its role as Chair of the UNWTO Commission for Europe: to contribute to the further development of Europe as the top tourist destination in the world, to strengthen the position of the European countries within UNWTO, and to increase the role, importance and relevance of UNWTO in Europe.
6. To achieve these targets Switzerland has started new and continued existing activities and initiatives.
7. Primarily we have focused our activities on developing the Programme of Work for Europe for the period 2018-2019. To take into consideration the requirements and expectations of the European member states to the greatest extent possible was of utmost importance to us.
8. That's why we continued the initiative that Austria started in 2014, to identify the most important challenges for European tourism. On this basis we reviewed and verified the most actual challenges in an exchange with the European member states in Vilnius. And we organized a workshop in Bern for the European member states to identify and prioritize relevant projects of work to meet these challenges and to define actions for the UNWTO Programme of Work. I don't want to elaborate on the workshop and the findings. They will be presented and discussed later today in item 7 of the provisional Agenda combined with the draft of the Programme of Work 2018-2019.
9. Our second focus is on the activities in the context of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017. Switzerland participates in the Steering Committee for the "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017" established by UNWTO. It is our particular aim in this respect to present the European view in the discussions.

10. The "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017" provides us with an excellent platform for confirming and recording the importance of tourism for sustainable development and to boost the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. It is a unique opportunity to strengthen and implement sustainable development at all levels. International, regional, national and subnational. In this context we support the UNWTO project "Journey to 2030" - Tourism for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) platform. The overall objective of this project is to demonstrate how the tourism sector can contribute towards the implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda and of the 17 SDGs, while providing a roadmap to tourism stakeholders to have an active role. One of the outcomes will be an online information and knowledge platform for SDG's and tourism.
11. The Swiss Economic Cooperation and Development Division of SECO plays an important role with projects focused on sustainable tourism in few selected priority countries. Through interventions supporting sustainable tourism such as strengthening framework conditions, supporting competitiveness of the destinations, contributing to skills development and enhancing environmental sustainability, SECO makes a positive contribution to local economies and societies in partner countries.
12. The closing ceremony of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 will be held in Geneva. This provides us with a great opportunity to highlight the importance of tourism for sustainable development.
13. The 1<sup>st</sup> UNWTO World Conference on Smart Destinations in Murcia showed among other findings, that smart destinations can foster the sustainable management of resources and environmental sustainability as a model for change. This brings me to the third subject of our activities: digitalization.
14. The conference in Murcia showed that all business performance depends on the availability and quality of data. Data is crucial to offer customized services, to meet the needs of the new digital tourists or to enable destination management organizations (DMO's) to be more efficient and competitive. Open platforms based on the sharing economy play an increasingly important role and will render citizen participation more and more crucial for the success of any initiative, especially at the local level.
15. Digitalisation is an absolute strategic key topic for tourism in Europe. The development of new business models provides great opportunities for the tourism industry. However, there will also be losers, and that is something we have to learn to live with. The topic of digitalisation also creates complex questions for the authorities and law-makers. Are the powers in the market to be trusted or do we require new regulations? And particularly: Are the new technologies providing opportunities for deregulation? Are we able to abolish regulations that are no longer required and restrict business activities and thus contribute to a more dynamic development of the tourism industry?
16. We believe that with our activities the key subjects of the UNWTO Programme of Work for 2016-2017 are well covered. Furthermore we already are contributing to an increased integration of members and a higher efficiency in member servicing by the UNWTO as described in the area of work "member relations" of the Programme of Work 2018-2019.

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## Insights on Switzerland's tourism policy

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17. The target of Switzerland's tourism policy is for Swiss tourism to make better use of its exceptional potential, to utilise growth in order to create jobs and increase the net value added for the regions. As a tourism destination Switzerland is a model of sustainability and Swiss tourism is continually improving its resource efficiency. To this end Switzerland's tourism policy focuses on three key topics: entrepreneurship, framework conditions and digitalisation.
18. Entrepreneurship lies at the heart of all business activities and most importantly it's crucial to realize innovations. To enable entrepreneurship is a key target of Switzerland's tourism policy. But it probably is one of the hardest topics to tackle and to achieve. How can bureaucracy inspire entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurship? Switzerland chose to enable entrepreneurship through an adequate educational system and labour market policy. In addition we approach the topic by fostering cooperation and strategy orientation.
19. However all entrepreneurship is in vain, if framework conditions impede the realization of business ideas. The vast majority of the key projects of the Swiss tourism policy therefore aim at improving framework conditions. A focal point here lies on improving the coordination between tourism policy and other sectoral policies.
20. The third focus of our tourism policy is digitalisation. Digitalisation brings massive changes for the industry. It holds great opportunities that need to be seized. First of all this is the task of the industry and the tourism actors themselves. With our tourism policy we try to contribute to the effectiveness and the efficiency with which the industry can engage these tasks. One focal point is to ensure that the tourism actors are able to keep up with the digital leaders.

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## Comments on the UNWTO Programme of Work for Europe for the period 2018-2019

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21. The Programme of Work 2018-2019 tackles the most important challenges of the tourism industry. It provides to long term policies as it continues previous and present work. In addition it includes new priorities that have been expressed by UNWTO Members through the survey conducted at the end of 2016 and through the output paper of the workshop in Bern. Over all the Programme of Work 2018-2019 is strongly connected to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
22. The Programme of Work 2018-2019 provides a solid foundation for further cooperation and collaboration. The UNWTO aims to respond in an efficient and effective manner to the diverse needs of the different Members. On the other hand UNWTO encourages the member states to consider how they may contribute to the projects of the Programme of Work 2018-2019. CEU member states are kindly asked to take lead in initiatives in areas they have special experiences or knowledge. UNWTO will support Members' efforts in launching and managing international tourism initiatives.
23. Switzerland will continue to contribute in an active way to implement the Programme of Work 2018-2019. And we will continue our intensive cooperation with the UNWTO and its bodies.