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Communication of the Chairman

Message of the Chairman of the UNWTO Executive Council, Mr. Carlos Ricardo Benavides Jiménez, Minister of Tourism of Costa Rica

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my capacity as Chairman of the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization, it is a great pleasure to bid you a most cordial welcome to Kish Island, Iran, which the *New York Times* ranked among the world's ten most beautiful islands in 2010. It is an island full of history, being mentioned as early as 325 BC as a strategic navigation point of Alexander the Great's fleet.

This has been a year in which tourism showed itself to be one of the world's most resilient activities. Throughout the planet, we can already see encouraging tourist arrival figures in all of our countries' destinations.

As I had mentioned at our meeting in Iguazu, the consequences of the volcanic eruption in Iceland has shown us the need for greater protection of travellers in the event of disasters in all parts of the world. I am therefore pleased to see that the agenda of this meeting includes preparations for a preliminary study on tourist/consumer protection in crisis situations.

After having held an initial discussion regarding the restructuring process of the World Tourism Organization being carried out by our Secretary-General, Dr. Taleb Rifai, we once again have the opportunity to look at the White Paper, which is aimed at making the UNWTO's work more efficient by making the most out of the human and material resources at the Organization's disposal today.

We are happy to learn that new States have joined the Organization and that many public and private institutions have also wished to become part of it as Affiliate Members. This shows that, far from losing relevance, the UNWTO is gaining in importance for the world of tourism with each passing day.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with much sadness that Costa Rica must today leave behind its functions as Chairman and as a Member of this Executive Council, it has been a great honour for us to have served the UNWTO during these past years which have left us with wonderful memories and experiences, but we are especially appreciative of having been able to develop friendships that we will treasure forever. We hope to continue working with all of you and with the Organization in other areas, and I would like to express as early as now our full willingness to do so.

Thank you.