



UNWTO COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Fifty-third meeting

Calabar, Nigeria, 25 June 2012

CAF/53

Madrid, May 2012

Original: English

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL SPEAKING POINTS FOR THE OPENING CEREMONY

- Honoured by the presence of the Vice-President of Nigeria or the Governor of the Cross River State, and thankful by the warm welcome received from the Government and the people of Nigeria;
- The presence of the Vice-President is a strong signal of the importance the government places on the tourism sector as one of the priority areas of the social and economic development policy of the country;
- Thank H.E. Chief Edem Duke, Federal Minister of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation for the efforts made to ensure the smooth functioning of our proceedings by means of the excellent working conditions made available to us in Calabar and for the team spirit shown in working UNWTO in the preparation of this meeting;
- Nigeria is a member of the UNWTO Executive Council and of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, and has always demonstrated exemplary activeness, dynamism and leadership in



its relations with our organization, which we will surely continue to strengthen;

- Nigeria is hosting for the third time the UNWTO Commission for Africa meeting after the 38th in 2002; the 47th in 2008;
- The Government of Nigeria in its quest to promote development and diversify the economy has decided to take some important measures towards promoting the tourism sector. Among these is the Tourism Development Master Plan (2006); UNWTO as executive agency is proud to have contributed in its preparation;
- UNWTO has also carried out several other activities in Nigeria, such as Training Programme for Tourism Officials; the Formulation of a Ecotourism Development Plan for the Farinrunwa-Nasarawa State or Institutional and capacity strengthening of the tourism sector for the Cross River State in Calabar.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- As a prelude to our work, please allow me to give you a brief overview of the current global tourism situation;
- International tourist arrivals grew by 4.6% in 2011 to a total 982 million, up from 939 million in 2010. In a year characterised by a stalled global economic recovery, major political changes in the Middle East and North Africa and natural disasters namely the terrible earthquake and tsunami in Japan, overall results were clearly above expectations. Contrary to previous years, growth was

slightly higher in advanced economies (+4.8%) than in emerging ones (+4.3%), due largely to the strong results in Europe, and the declines in the Middle East and North Africa;

- Africa held steady at 50 million international arrivals, with the increase of 2 million in destinations of sub-Saharan Africa (+7%) being offset by declines in North Africa (-9%).
- UNWTO forecasts international tourism to continue growing in 2012 although at a slower rate. Arrivals are expected to increase by 3% to 4%, reaching the historic one billion mark by December 2012.
- In fact, the first estimates of 2012 confirm these positive prospects. Growth in international arrivals in the first four months of 2012 has surpassed 5%, continuing to show the resilience of our sector; Africa in particular show an impressive 6% increase.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is indisputable that despite tourism's role in stimulating the global economy; enhancing employment and creating jobs; alleviating poverty and supporting development, the sector is still denied the rightful place in international, and often in national, spheres;
- UNWTO is committed to mainstreaming tourism in the global agenda in order to draw the attention of the international community to tourism's great contribution to the world economy and society and ensure that in turn the sector is given the support it needs to continue growing;

- We believe tourism has a particularly important role to play in Africa;
- Africa has been one of the fastest growing regions in the world in terms of tourism in the last decades; in one decade the number of tourists in Africa has doubled to reach 50 million in 2011;
- Behind this impressive growth is the potential of the sector to, directly and through the numerous linkages to other key sectors such as agriculture or handicrafts, bring new opportunities to the region.
- It is also true, that despite the accelerated development of tourism in the last years, Africa still faces various challenges namely in terms of infrastructure and accessibility; UNWTO is fully committed to continue actively supporting its African Members in improving their tourism sector and making it a key in the path towards development;
- UNWTO has reinforced its activities in Africa with programmes and initiatives that directly impact on socio-economic development and poverty reduction, one of the most important being the Millennium Development Goals projects;
- This Commission happens in a moment in which tourism is increasingly part of the development agenda, namely within the UN system. We must seize this moment.

- To maximize these opportunities, UNWTO is leading an effort to bring together 9 UN agencies and programmes to deliver as ONE UN for tourism. The Steering Committee on Tourism for Development opens new possibilities to promote tourism in the development programmes and funding mechanisms, issues which are key to advance the sector in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Africa will be complemented by a seminar on “Responsible Tourism: Opportunities for Women and Youth”; a theme carefully chosen in consultation with our members.
- This seminar will explore the ways in which the sector can improve conditions for women and young people throughout the region, and in so doing benefit the tourism sector at large;
- The seminar promises to be intensive but exciting, and I am confident that the discussions and deliberations will achieve, and even excel, the desired objectives;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to sincerely thank once again on behalf of all participants the Government of Nigeria for hosting this event, and for making us all feel like home;
- Thank you for very much for your kind attention.