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Communication of the Chair

Message of the Chair of the UNWTO Executive Council,
Honourable Danson M. Mwazo, Minister for Tourism, Kenya

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the 93rd Session of the Council in this beautiful Country of Spain which also hosts the headquarters of the UNWTO. I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Government of Spain for hosting us.

As you are all aware, the last one year has been a great success in tourism as the international arrivals hit an all-time high of 980 million up from 940 million in 2010. This trend is expected to continue this year with the focus being to cross the 1 billion mark. With this growth, Governments are bound to feel the impact of tourism in both their economies and other sectors.

In view of this, I would like to applaud the efforts of the UNWTO in engaging the various world leaders to appreciate the importance of tourism through the Leaders of Tourism Campaign. The presentation and acceptance of the open letter by the world leaders is a significant step towards the realization that tourism has an important role to play in all sectors of the world economies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to commend the ongoing initiative by the UNWTO Working Group on the Protection of Tourists/Consumers and Travel Organizers in ensuring a well informed and safe consumer. The working group is doing a commendable job and I believe at the end of their work, they will produce a widely accepted document that will protect not only the consumer, but the service providers as well. It should be noted that when consumers feel that they are well informed, they become confident and are willing to travel more as such, the tourism industry continues to grow.

Travel can further be eased if tourists have quicker access to visas. UNWTO should now facilitate travel by helping member states with modalities of designing and implementing an Electronic visa system. This will greatly reduce the bottlenecks of travel.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

In our aspiration to grow the tourism numbers as competitive destinations, I would emphasize the need for sustainability.

I am glad to note that this year's theme for the World Tourism Day which is also being hosted by the Government of Spain is **Tourism and Sustainable Energy-Powering Sustainable Development**. In this regard, I would like to challenge the Committee on Sustainable Development of Tourism to provide leadership and guidance in ensuring that destinations and consumers in equal measure uphold sustainable tourism practices. This way, we will have a successful tourism industry that is anchored on the principle of inter-generational equity that is, meeting the needs of the current generation without jeopardizing those of the future generation to their needs.

The other major challenge to all of us as the Council is to look into ways of financing the organization. UNWTO is an important institution and plays a crucial role in providing leadership in the global tourism industry. Without sustainable and adequate funding, we will fall short of meeting our obligations as an Organization. Therefore as member states we should continue honouring our contributions as well as explore other sources of funding the Organization's programmes.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to encourage all of you to make your utmost contributions to the debate and deliberations of this Session as this will go a long way in strengthening of our esteemed Organization. I also urge you to take time to enjoy Spain which is one of the leading tourism destinations in the world.