Seventy-third session
Hyderabad, India, 8 - 9 July 2004
Provisional agenda item 2

COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIRMAN

Note by the Secretary-General

In this document, the Secretary-General submits the communication of the Chairman of the Executive Council for the consideration of its Members.
COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,
Dear Members of the Executive Council, colleagues and friends!

First of all, on behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation I should like to express our gratitude to all members of the Executive Council, which did a high honour and expressed their trust in my country by re-electing it to the important post of Chairman of the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization for 2004.

We feel a special responsibility for the Council’s activity this year, the first year when our Organization functions as a specialized agency of the United Nations. The current year is also special thanks to positive trends in global tourism after a series of crisis years. The successes of many countries including our host, India, add to our optimism.

For this Council you are offered a heavy agenda on various vital issues of the life and activities of the Organization, and although they are all important, I should like to focus your attention on several of them.

In the first place, we should note with appreciation the progress of implementing the heavy current WTO general programme of work, as regards both areas of activity and regions. This is noteworthy as the Organization has limited resources. I also believe promising the systemic approach towards developing the programme of work for the next period of 2006-2007.

An area of activity that deserves a special attention of the Council members, is the development of the Sustainable Tourism -Eliminating Poverty programme (ST-EP). We should think about how to make this programme result-oriented and efficient for the benefit of less developed countries, moreover the Republic of Korea has lent generous support to this project. Appropriate mechanisms should be set up to develop working pilot projects in order to prevent a transformation of this noble programme in an ineffectual bureaucratic structure.

I also consider as very sound Columbia’s initiative regarding special measures to protect hotels and tourist attractions, as tourists a very vulnerable lot and the “fragility” of tourism infrastructure.

As regards the Organization’s new status within the United Nations system, I believe that the approval of the set of documents referring to the status of a UN specialized agency, which are submitted under agenda items 6 (a), (b) and (c), will automatically secure this position. I am proud that Russia, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, actively contributed to this transformation of WTO, and I know that all members of the Executive Council took the same positive stance.
In this regard, a serious issue is the replacement of our Institution's acronym in English and Russian, suggested by our esteemed Secretary-General. On the one hand, it is hurting, to some extent, to give up a legitimate acronym (WTO), in force since the inception of our organization. On the other hand, it is obvious that to continue the WTO acronym brings about confusion of our Organization with the World Trade Organization and affects the understanding of the specificity of our activities. The new version, «UNWTO» in English and «IOHBO» in Russian will fuller reflect the new status of our Institution. In this regard, I would like to hear the views also of French and Spanish-speaking members of the Council (as far as I understand, Arabic has no acronyms due to its linguistic structure), whether it would be appropriate to harmonize the new proposed acronym in all the languages of the Organization.

The World Tourism Day will be celebrated this year under the theme of a close relationship between tourism and sport, and we have warmly accepted the joint message by the WTO Secretary-General and the President of the IOC. I urge all Members of the Council and all Members of the Organization to celebrate this momentous event in their countries in an appropriately high level.

All other items included in the agenda of this Council session of course also deserve our focused attention, and I am confident that we will consider them in a constructive manner in order to maintain an appropriate dynamics of our Organization's activity in favour of all its members.

I should like to conclude by expressing my appreciation to the Programme Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee and all the other bodies of the Organization for their contribution to the work of the Council. I am also grateful to all sections and programmes of the Secretariat for their efficient work under the guidance of Secretary-General Francesco Franghiali for the benefit of all members of the Organization. I am confident that the 73rd session of the Executive Council being held in India on the kind invitation of the Government of this great and tourism-attractive country, will proceed in a constructive manner and will take decisions of importance to WTO and to global tourism.

Thank you.