

**DRAFT**

**Communication of the Chair**

**Virtual Meeting**

UNWTO 63<sup>rd</sup> Regional Commission for Africa

**H.E Mr Ronald Kaoma Chitotela MP,**

Cabinet Minister of Tourism and Arts, the Republic of Zambia

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

- **Your Excellency Amb. Zurab Pololikashvili - UNWTO Secretary-General**
- **Your Excellency Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid Commissioner of Infrastructure and Energy of the African Union**
- **Your Excellency Mr Najib Balala - Cabinet Secretary for Tourism of the Republic of Kenya and Chair of the UNWTO Executive Council.**
- **Fellow Ministers from across the continent and beyond**
- **Your Excellencies Ambassadors present here**
- **Distinguished CAF Members**
- **Invited guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As Chair of this August gathering allow me, on behalf of my team here and indeed our Permanent Representative and her team in Paris France, to express sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General and his team for having managed to organise this meeting virtually.

**DEAR COLLEAGUES**

I welcome you all to the 63<sup>rd</sup> UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa, the first-ever virtual African regional Meeting. On behalf of my President who is an ardent supporter of this industry, the entire Government and indeed the people of Zambia, home of the Mighty Victoria Falls; one of the seven natural wonders of the world. I take this opportunity to say how honoured I am to have this opportunity to guide virtually deliberations of this important gathering.

**SECRETARY-GENERAL, EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS**

Before I present my communication allow me on behalf of my country and the entire leadership of our continent to pay our sincere condolences to all those that have lost loved ones across the globe to COVID-19 pandemic.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

As you may all recall this meeting was scheduled to take place in March in Seychelles in the wonderful historical and botanical city of Victoria on Mahé Island, home of one of Africa's best white-sand beaches, endemic palms and orchids, as well as giant tortoises and fruit bats. Today, the city of Victoria has emerged as one of Africa's important cities on our continent home to a vibrant, friendly and hospitable people with a rich cultural heritage. There are simply no words strong enough to describe Seychelles except to say it is another world

We could have clearly experienced and understood why this city is becoming one of Africa's most popular tourist destinations and had been enjoying enviable growth in international tourist arrivals until this pandemic struck. It is so sad, however, that this pandemic has robbed us of a unique opportunity.

To my colleague **Didier Dogley** Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports and Marines of Seychelles, please take heart and be rest assured that soon we shall come to visit your beautiful country.

### **COMRADES, DEAR COLLEAGUES**

During the last five months, humanity has been confronted with a global health situation never witnessed and never imaged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Across all regions of the world, the human race has been involved in a serious war with an invisible enemy, what makes it even more challenging Colleagues, is that this enemy has not only negatively impacted on the health sector but every human life causing unprecedented havoc on economical, trade, geopolitical and social. Unfortunately, this pandemic represents an even added drawback in the context of weaker world economies like those of us in Africa,

Regrettably, Colleagues, the travel and tourism industry has been one of the hardest-hit by this pandemic adversely impacting on each of the industry's supply chain.

**Comrades**, it is undeniable fact that all over the world tourism has become an important social-economic sector that is driving change over the years. Tourism has undergone sustained growth and intensified diversification to become one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. . These dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress.

For us in Africa, tourism is one key driving wheel towards the attainment of our aspirations set out in Agenda 2063 driven by the spirit of Pan Africanism, focusing on development, political steadiness, social and economic independence. For us, with all our wonderful natural resources and cultural heritage, the potential for tourism transforming lives is real.

### **SECRETARY-GENERAL, DEAR COLLEAGUES**

Even though our region has not been heavily affected by COVID-19 like other regions of the world, the impact of this pandemic on the tourism industry is exceedingly noticeable and has

been heavily felt by many destinations and industry players. We have suffered greatly because this pandemic has hit us from the head, which is our main source markets.

**Colleagues** the biggest challenge for the Africa region unlike other regions like Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Americans, is that our tourism industry is heavily dependent on intra-continental markets.

We have unfortunately neglected the Africa intra-travel for a long time and from where I stand Comrades, the only way Africa's tourism industry will be sustainable is when we change our marketing strategies and approaches by focusing our tourism promotional and marketing efforts on intra-Africa travel.

Therefore, as we deliberate during this meeting and going forward after this pandemic is contained, let us realise the importance of intra-travel. Africa's tourism will only be sustainable once we overcome the challenges that currently hinder many Africans to travel within the continent, it is quite ironical to find that we as Africans find it easier and more cost-effective to travel abroad than within our own continent.

#### **EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

I am somehow delighted that we are meeting on the background of a slowdown in new infections and deaths in many parts of the world. I am also comforted to note that, many countries across our region and around the world have started unlocking and easing up various restrictions implemented to combat the spread of this virus. This indeed is a good sign on the road towards the recovery of our industry.

#### **COMRADES**

Moving towards recovery we are seeing many countries around the world gradually starting to open up by relaxing social distancing restrictions in a multi-phase approach and specific to the opening up the tourism sector, what we are witnessing is an approach based on the three-phase approach domestic, regional and then international.

Many countries around the world are encouraging their citizens to travel within their country or around the region. We all know that this is the most prudent and effective approach towards normality.

#### **DEAR COLLEAGUES**

According to predictions by industry experts, even when the outbreak is over, it could take up to 10 months for the tourism sector to recover. For many destinations in our region, it could take well take over a year. Additionally, industry experts estimate that the 2020 global international tourist arrivals in Africa could decline to between 1% to 3%. A recent study from

the African Union estimates that the tourism and travel sector in Africa could lose at least \$50 million due to the pandemic outbreak and at least 2 million direct and indirect jobs.

With these predictions, it calls for us on the region in our different destinations to draw from past experiences and put together plans to manage the post-COVID-19 void.

#### **SECRETARY-GENERAL, MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION**

As I stated in our last Global Crisis committee meeting the main factors that will springboard international travel confidence and trust is safety and security in service provisions in our respective destinations. No Governments will be able to revamp the tourism sector in isolation without the collaboration with other stakeholders. Public-private partnership is critical!

If there is time to work together across the board; it is now!

#### **SECRETARY-GENERAL, EXCELLENCIES, DEAR COLLEAGUES**

As we move towards recovery, we should not forget that we have a regional policy agenda **“UNWTO Agenda for Africa 2030: Tourism for inclusive growth”**, adopted during the last General Assembly held in Saint Petersburg Russia.

#### **EXCELLENCIES, DEAR COLLEAGUES**

May I remind you that UNWTO Agenda for Africa 2030: Tourism for inclusive growth is a roadmap now serving the Africa region as a blueprint and a strategic framework to help unlock this region’s tourism potential towards inclusive development.

This special purpose vehicle initiative is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it fully reflects the seven aspirations of the Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU) for a socio-economic transformation of the continent through sustainable tourism.

#### **SECRETARY-GENERAL, COLLEAGUES**

In the wake of this global challenge that has impacted so negatively on the tourism sector, it will be important that we go back to the drawing board and revisit the implementation of this policy agenda.

We know that tourism can play a significant role in the overall social-economic emancipation of our beloved continent but as it has been said before, this will need a radical change in our

approach to tourism policy formulations, strategies implementation and development in our respective destinations and at continental level.

In the last two decades, Tourism has become an important economic sector in our region. There have been increased investments in product development and enhancement, aggressive marketing, coupled with appropriate business-friendly socio-political reforms. The World Bank reports that one in 20 jobs in sub-Saharan Africa is in the travel and tourism sector.

Therefore, if Africa's tourism industry has to make a meaningful contribution to United Nations **2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063 dubbed "**the Africa we want**" it calls for all of us to work together and make our continent competitive.

### **YOUR EXCELLENCE**

May I also emphasise Comrades that as we work towards recovery our main priorities should be to protect jobs for our people, build liquidity for our tourism businesses and above all build confidence trust on safety and security for our visitors.

### **DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION**

As I end, I am very happy by the swift actions taken by world leaders to try and minimise and ultimately contain this pandemic. In this regard, Comrades allow me to sincerely thank and congratulate our Secretary-General, other industry leaders and all of you for remaining committed and providing the needed leadership since the outbreak of this virus in Wuhan China.

Ever since the virus started spreading out of China our Secretary-General has remained steadfast providing us with the necessary information for our industry and engaging with other global industry leaders through the Global Tourism Crisis Committee.

**Comrades** permit me to also thank our Heads of State across our region from Cape to Cairo for their resolute leadership in ensuring that the spread of the virus on the African continent is minimised and contained.

### **DEAR COLLEAGUES,**

We shall overcome, the tourism sector is resilient and has often overcome crises. However, what is key for our region is to develop strategies to cope with crises including preparedness, rapid development and deployment of a response network. It also includes managing communication in the face of a crisis and introducing measures to promote swift recovery.

Stay safe and safeguard our resources.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

**I THANK YOU**

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