

Agenda item 2
Communication of the Chair

CE/112/2
Madrid, 4 August 2020
Original: English

The UNWTO is going green. All Executive Council documents are available on the UNWTO website at www.unwto.org or use the Quick Response code here.



Message of the Chair of the 112th UNWTO Executive Council

Honourable Najib Balala, Minister for Tourism and Wildlife, Republic of Kenya

H.E Mr. Zurab Pololikshvili, UNWTO Secretary General,
H.E Mr Dario Franceschini Minister for Culture and Tourism, Italy, and
1st Executive Council Vice Chair, H.E. Mr Carlos Santos, Minister of Tourism and Transport, Cape Verde
and 2nd Executive Council Vice Chair,
Excellencies, fellow Ministers,
Ms. Elcia Grandcourt, UNWTO Regional Director, Africa Department,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I wish to extend my heartfelt condolences, and those of my country and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) fraternity to thousands of families, countries and member states that have lost their children, family members, country men and women due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Let us all be upstanding and observe a minute of silence to all COVID-19 victims globally. Ladies and Gentlemen, you may take your seats. Thank you.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Georgia for according us warm hospitality and for welcoming us to this great Nation since our arrival.

Let me also take this opportunity to express my personal gratitude to all distinguished Executive Council members and all delegates for being brave and travelling out of your homes and countries to attend this meeting despite the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a great statement of confidence that tourism and travel is rebounding in the new normal under the global health and safety protocols. We need to restart and encourage tourism and travel. Indeed, I believe it is us leaders who need to stand up and strategically guide the process of rejuvenating tourism globally once again.

I wish to thank Mr Zurab Pololikashvili the Secretary United Nations General World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), for hosting the 112th Executive Council meeting, and more so in his hometown. It's a great honor, to host many distinguished excellences' ministers, in your home of origin. The distinct attractiveness of Tbilisi evidently shows the origin of your passion for Tourism.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me applaud all the global Tourism leaders, led by Mr Zurab Pololikashvili, all excellences' ministers of Tourism and leaders from member states and stakeholders in the tourism sector for providing strategic leadership in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. The Tourism and Travel industry commitment to putting

people and their well-being first is commendable for it will ensure that we effectively contribute to the containment of COVID-19.

It is evident that global and national travel restrictions have negatively impacted the tourism sector. There is no end in sight of the Covid-19 pandemic although global efforts to develop vaccine(s) are ongoing. The key to fighting this pandemic as advocated by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNWTO, Health Practitioners and Governments globally, is good hygiene, social distancing and wearing of masks when outdoors.

Although the pandemic is a threat to the progress of our industry, we must ensure that the tourism sector does not collapse totally. We should continue to safeguard livelihoods and jobs for those who directly or indirectly rely on this sector. With destinations and member states re-opening their borders and resuming tourism activities, it is imperative that we adhere to the UNWTO guidelines and WHO health protocols to ensure that tourists, travelers and staff in the tourism sector are safe. I have no doubt that the restarting of tourism and travel will inspire hope and give opportunity for a better life for millions of people around the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to commend, Mr Zurab Pololikashvili, the Secretary General, UNWTO and UNWTO Global Tourism Crisis Committee for uniting the tourism sector to formulate a sector-wide response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. The recommendations by the UNWTO Global Crisis Committee to support jobs and economies and the restart of Tourism are strategies whose results are evident with the hosting of these series of meetings today, here in Georgia. As the Executive Chair of the UNWTO, I commend the collaboration and partnership demonstrated by world tourism leaders and stakeholders in their effort to ensure that world tourism rebounds and recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tourism has become one of the most important economic industries in the world today with jobs generated by travel and tourism spread across the global economy. However, tourism and travel are only viable in an environment of health and safety, a fact that is under threat from the unprecedented negative impact of Covid-19 Coronavirus. Therefore, we must resolve to work very hard to restart tourism and revive the world economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every pandemic brings with it both threats and opportunities, and the current opportunity is a chance for enhanced use of innovation and technology in health and safety. We must sell a better experience with top notch service in order to rebuild trust and confidence for travel and tourism activities.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Executive Council members for their confidence in our leadership and for electing Kenya as the Chair of the council for 2019/2020, with Italy and Cabo Verde as the 1st and 2nd Vice Chair respectively. As we continue serving the global tourism fraternity, I wish to welcome you all to Magical Kenya to experience our rich personalised hospitality, vast wildlife and beach products in a healthy and safe environment.

Last but not least, I now extend my best wishes for fruitful deliberations to all council members during this 112th Executive Council meeting, and enjoyable and safe stay here in Georgia.

Thank you all for listening to me.