

Agenda item 2

**Communication of the Chair**

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**113th Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization, Madrid 2020**  
**COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIR**  
**José Luis Uriarte - Chile**

Your Excellency Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, UNWTO Secretary-General,

First Vice-Chair of the UNWTO Executive Council, Senegal,

Second Vice-Chair of the UNWTO Executive Board, Saudi Arabia,

Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Members of the Executive Council, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before starting our work in this Council, I would like to convey, on behalf of the Government of Chile and this chairmanship of the Executive Council, my deepest solidarity with the families and countries affected by the catastrophic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. And I encourage all of us, in these circumstances, to put our work and effort in the service of revitalizing global tourism, setting our minds on making it a more sustainable and kinder industry, with a social impact for those who bring tourism to life.

I would like to begin by deeply thanking all the Member States of the Executive Council and Ambassadors who are joining us today during this important session, and it is an honour for me to open the first Council of 2021, at which the chairmanship will have the important mission of leading a year marked by the restart of the sector, which I am sure we will manage to do in conjunction with all the Member States.

In addition, I would particularly like to present my compliments to Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and thank him for the holding of the 113th session of the Executive Council in the city of Madrid, which is one of the biggest tourism gateways to Europe and which possesses a captivating cultural and historical heritage.

To start this Council, I would like to highlight the work of all those who are with us today, who have put in their efforts to deal with and overcome the greatest crisis in the history of tourism. However, I want to take the opportunity of this address to highlight the work that millions of workers in the industry do every day, who with their work—sometimes unheralded—bring to life a thousand tourist experiences, which drive thousands of local economies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year begins with our sector going through an unprecedented crisis, in which there are marked international and national travel restrictions in place. Yet it is possible to see a light at the end of so much darkness and the main challenge is to keep it in sight. Europe and the Americas are well aware of this painful process, where we sometimes move forward in the reopening of tourism, only to start over and face a second wave of contagions. This process should not discourage us, on the contrary, it must leave us with lessons, realizing that graduality is part of the restart of an industry that will return with new safety standards.

The coronavirus pandemic has become the greatest threat to tourism development. However, as part of the World Tourism Organization, we are called upon to be the institution responsible for articulating collaborative efforts among nations, encouraging the building of bridges between the public and private worlds in our strategy, and delivering a single message of unity and commitment from a responsible industry.

Today we must continue to work towards safeguarding the millions of jobs that tourism directly or indirectly generates in the world. For this purpose, the reopening of borders and the standardization of health protocols are fundamental pillars to incentivize and restore the confidence of travellers around the world and to reactivate the virtuous cycle generated by tourism.

In relation to the above, I would like to highlight the work that has been done in conjunction with other international agencies, such as the WHO and the Organization of American States (OAS), with which we have prepared various documents aimed at standardizing and validating health criteria and protocols for the entry of tourists to the various countries of the continent. At the same time, the work of WTTC, IATA and all the Affiliate Members has been instrumental in setting out a roadmap for the process of building a new way of practicing tourism in the world.

I would like to particularly highlight the important work that the UNWTO has done during this difficult year and for the support provided to all regions, starting with the establishment of the Crisis Committee, the Recommendations and Guidelines to Restart Tourism, as well as its contributions in the area of Sustainable Development, such as the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative for Hotels; in the fields of Competitiveness and Innovation and Digital Transformation, by supporting thousands of entrepreneurs with startup competitions; in Ethics and Social Responsibility, where it has supported women and culture; in Technical Cooperation, in the UNWTO Academy, in addition to a long list of other initiatives.

Dear Secretary-General, Representatives and Ambassadors, Friends,

In recent years tourism has become one of the most important economic sectors in the world, contributing almost 320 million jobs, that is to say, one out of every ten jobs is generated thanks to this industry, activating an extensive chain that generates all kinds of livelihoods.

All crises affect our industry in different ways—economically for travellers or even in terms of the confidence that factors such as safety can generate. The global pandemic has brought together all these factors, turning it into an unprecedented crisis. But it also marks a turning point for the transformation of tourism into an industry that will play a key role in the social and economic revival of hundreds of countries by becoming a real option that can spur governments to put their efforts back into attracting the interest of tourists. This point is very good news for all of us and for the sector because, without a doubt, once the crisis is over, we will see advances that will give life to a new tourism, safety and security, hygiene, and the appreciation of new spaces such as nature tourism, rural tourism and so many others that are emerging as a real alternatives to boost new destinations.

In conclusion, I ask all members of the Council to share in my optimism regarding this new opportunity that is budding for tourism. I know that these are difficult times, but I am convinced that, after this crisis, one of the greatest opportunities for our sector will emerge.

Thank you all very much and I hope that this 113rd session will be very auspicious for all, especially those nearly 320 million people around the world who are trusting in us to help restart tourism.

Thank you very much!