UNWTO 33rd CAP-CSA JOINT MEETING

14th September 2021

COMMUNICATION BY THE CHAIR,
H. E. DR. ABDULLA MAUSOOM
MINISTER OF TOURISM, MALDIVES

Thank you, Secretary General H. E Zurab Pololikashvili and Chair Mr. Mohd Zamri Mat Zain, Deputy Secretary-General, Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture of Malaysia and representatives of Member States.

It is my utmost privilege to Co-Chair the 33rd CAP-CSA Joint Meeting today. Though it’s unfortunate that we couldn’t hold the meeting in Sri Lanka as planned, we believe this meeting will be beneficial with new commitments and a way forward for us. I would like to take this moment to thank my colleague and our chairperson Mr. Mohd Zamri Mat Zain for this meeting. Partnering with Malaysia is indeed an honor, and I am confident that together we can make this meeting and our commitments a success.

Amidst the challenging trials of the Covid 19 pandemic, UNWTO, under the strong leadership of H.E Secretary General, Zurab has continued the efforts and developed concrete steps to maintain industry confidence while upholding the required safety standards. The UNWTO Global Tourism Crisis Committee has also been advocating to ensure timely monitoring, incorporating standardization and digitalization of testing and vaccination protocols. These measures have encouraged destinations to open borders with new strategic action plans and safe travel practices.

As a brief outlook on Maldives tourism, tourist arrivals have already reached pre-Covid levels. The total number of arrivals for the year 2021, as of 7th September 2021 was at 785,024, which is an increase of over 99% compared with the same period in 2020. Although this was a decline of 32% compared with the same period of 2019, the monthly numbers are picking up. As such during the month of August 2021 arrivals saw an increase of 3.1% compared with that of 2019 and in September as of 7th the rate is at 15.3%. The COVID-19 situation has been controlled significantly. The tourist positivity rate, which was at 0.19% (15th July – 31st Dec) at the end of 2020 has lowered to 0.11% in 2021 as of August, with strict travel measures in place and stringent enforcement in monitoring and inspection of tourist facilities. It is important to highlight the drastic change in Maldives covid situation is also due to the successful rollout of vaccination which started in February 2021. By the end of August 2021, a total of 300,427 individuals have completed two doses of vaccination which is 54% of the total population. 93% of the tourism sector employees were fully vaccinated while 99% received at least one dose. The government’s priority is to provide safe tourism for all.

The Maldives has introduced TOURISM DIVERSIFICATION AND COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT with the intention of providing better technical input in realization of tourism diversification and localization policies of the government; namely Strategic Action plan 2019 - 2023 (SAP) and the National Resilient Recovery Plan 2020 - 2022 (NRR). These documents act as a direction to
further develop tourism sector of the Maldives based on sustainable tourism principles and practices.

The Government is also focusing on bringing tourism recovery projects to address the vulnerable areas and seek assistance in technical recovery of tourism, as well as economic and social practices to create more opportunities, expand the technological and digital transformation. Reliance on foreign investments will alleviate the tourism projects in distress, bringing them to operation that will inevitably open the labor market creating more opportunities for youngsters and unemployed youths.

I also take this opportunity to thank you all for supporting and accepting my invitation to travel and take part in the 15th Executive Training that will be hosted by the Maldives. This will definitely be a chance to gather our ideas and enjoy a break from the limited travel life we’ve had. I look forward to welcoming you all to the Sunny Side of Life.