

Agenda item 2

**Communication of the Chair**

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**Draft speech by the Chair of the Executive Council of UNWTO,  
H.E. Siandou Fofana, Minister of Tourism and Leisure, Côte d'Ivoire**

**116th session of the Executive Council  
Jeddah, 7 and 8 June 2022**

Ladies and gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and his Government, for the warm welcome we have received and for the facilities offered to ensure that our meeting is a success. More particularly, I would like to acknowledge the warm and fraternal availability of our colleague First Vice-Chair of the Executive Council who has spared no effort in making our stay especially memorable. We are most grateful to you and your teams.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I consider it an honour to chair the deliberations of this important meeting. In fact, through me, it is the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire who have rallied together and have given me their blessings for the work to be done. I would like to salute the strong presence of almost all the members of the Executive Council.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In an increasingly globalised world, tourism has been acknowledged as an essential factor for growth. It is therefore in the interests of all of us, and of all the UNWTO Member States, to make it survive so that it can continue to prosper for the good of mankind.

There is no need to stress that, over the last few years, tourism has been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, with a negative impact on our respective countries. However, tourism has proved to be an economically sound and resilient activity as well as an important lever for the recovery of commercial transactions on a global scale.

So, by focusing on sustainable tourism in destinations, we are allowing destination managers, communities and enterprises to maximise the social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits for communities, visitors and the cultural heritage, while minimising any negative impacts.

I would like to encourage you to contribute actively to the debates of this session, because they will be very important for strengthening the Organisation.

I would like to remind you that, in its 114<sup>th</sup> session, the Executive Council did not recommend any Full Member for the position of Auditor to carry out the auditing of the UNWTO financial statements for the years ending on 31 December 2021 and 2022, even though the General Assembly, in its twenty-fourth session, was unable to reach a decision on this matter, as provided for by article 26.1 of the Statutes.

Since the report on the audited financial statements for the period ending on 31 December 2021 must be submitted to the Executive Council for examination before 30 April 2022, I accepted the proposal by the Secretary-General that the members of the Council recommend to the Assembly, under a silence procedure for approval, that it elect Spain, which applied before the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly, to the post of Auditor for the period 2022-2023.

In view of this and in line with the special procedures applicable to the Executive Council during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNWTO Secretariat, on behalf of the Council Chair, distributed a draft decision allowing the Council to recommend Spain to the position of Auditor for the period 2022-2023, which was adopted by the silence procedure considering that no objection was received before the deadline. The Council is invited to take note of this decision at this session.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The military crisis between the Russian Federation and Ukraine can be seen as an intrusion that has come to disturb the harmony and cordial understanding that have always prevailed within our Organisation. In consequence, after examining the situation, the Extraordinary General Assembly held on 27 April 2022 proposed that the Russian Federation be suspended as a member of UNWTO. While expressing my wish that this crisis will come to an end as soon as possible, I pay a respectful tribute to the memory of the civilians and soldiers who have disappeared.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Finally, I would like to thank the secretariat of the World Tourism Organisation and, more personally, its Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili, for the energy shown and for the innovation and efficiency with which their demanding functions are carried out, allowing UNWTO, an important organisation, to fulfil its considerable responsibilities.

I would also like to thank all the delegations for their remarkable dynamism and the splendid work of coordination that has taken place to ensure the success of my term as Chair.