Excellency Secretary-General, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Minister of Tourism, Maldives and Chairperson, H.E. Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Honourable Ministers, Members of the Commissions, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, it gives me great pleasure to meet everyone in person on the occasion of the 34th CAP-CSA Joint Meeting, a historic milestone for Asia-Pacific Member States as more countries in the region enjoy a gradual rebound with the easing of restrictions and border reopenings in our transition towards COVID-19 endemcity.

Let me also congratulate our gracious hosts, the Republic of Maldives on its golden jubilee celebrations this year, marking the 50th anniversary of the Maldives’ tourism industry. My heartfelt thanks for the kind hospitality extended to Member States in hosting the series of events held in conjunction with these meaningful celebrations. The Maldives’ remarkable tourism recovery has been nothing short of inspiring and we look forward to exchanging insights and strengthening ties towards further spurring recovery across the region.

Currently, according to the March 2022 edition of the UNWTO’s World Tourism Barometer, Asia and the Pacific recorded a 44% year-on-year increase in international arrivals and a 93% decline compared to 2019 levels. While remaining below the level of other regions - Europe (+199%), the Americas (+97%), the Middle East (+89%) and Africa (+51%) -, we recognize the potential for further growth as more destinations in the region show positive signs in terms of COVID-19 vaccination progress and health indicators which have allowed a safe reopening for international tourism.
Likewise, with Malaysia now among the highest vaccinated countries in the world, the Government has recently launched a full reopening of Malaysia’s borders to international travellers beginning from 1st April 2022, which allows quarantine-free entry for travellers vaccinated against COVID-19. Since 1st May 2022, fully-vaccinated travellers are also no longer required to undergo pre-departure and on-arrival COVID-19 tests, including children aged 12 and below as well as those who have been infected with COVID-19 within six to 60 days before departure. Notably, these entry procedures have been largely harmonised between Malaysia and its neighbouring countries, Singapore and Thailand, encouraging cross-border tourism which represented Malaysia’s largest market share prior to the pandemic.

Malaysia is also fully committed to implementing the strategic actions of its Tourism Recovery Plan 2022, which comprises 5 pathways to recovery:

(i) To support tourism businesses with recovery measures;
(ii) Enable safe and seamless restoration of travel;
(iii) Reinvent tourism services to drive competitiveness;
(iv) Align tourism with sustainability and inclusivity; and
(v) Reinforce recovery with long-term resilience and crisis preparedness.

Furthermore, Malaysia has recently launched the roll-out of robust economic incentives in the form of vouchers, rebates, discounts and attractive travel packages in partnership with businesses throughout the entire tourism ecosystem, including land transport, air transport, accommodation and special interest tourism. With these initiatives in place, I am confident that Malaysia is on track to maximising its domestic strengths as well as achieving its target of 2 million international arrivals by year end.

As Malaysia’s 2022 Calendar of Events marks a full return to in-person events for the first time in 2 years, I would like to take this opportunity to personally invite and welcome all CAP and CSA Member Countries to the 6th World Tourism Conference 2022, a signature event co-organised by Malaysia and UNWTO. This year’s edition will take place in the heart of Malaysian Borneo in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, from 28 until 30 November 2022. Themed ‘Tourism Futures Reimagined’, the conference will serve as a
platform which champions thought leadership on tourism futures and strategies driving tourism’s recovery and resilience in a post-pandemic world. I hope you could kindly save the dates in your busy schedules and look forward to seeing everyone in Malaysia later this year.

On that note, I would like express my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General of UNWTO, H.E. Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili and his team at the Regional Department for Asia Pacific for their strong support as well as the introduction of timely initiatives such as the Best Tourism Villages, Digital Futures Programme and Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines, among others, which have greatly benefited member states in this region.

In these challenging times with multiple crises unfolding around the world, I believe that UNWTO will continue to be an important partner in advancing the global agenda to build forward better. With that, I wish to encourage all of you to make your utmost contributions to the discussion and deliberations of this meeting, which will go a long way towards reaffirming our close partnership for a stronger and better tourism industry post-COVID-19.

Thank you.

H.E. Dato’ Sri Nancy Shukri
Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia