

UNWTO 35TH CAP-CSA JOINT MEETING

16th June 2022

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Communication of the Co-Chair
Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Minister of Tourism
(Maldives)

Good morning Chair H.E. Dato' Sri Tiong King Sing, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Media representatives and ladies and gentleman.

It is an honor and pleasure to be here today, enjoying the beautiful country of Cambodia with its great hospitality and cuisine and I would like to express heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegates from the point of our arrival, to H.E. Dr. Thong Khon, Minister of Tourism and the people of Cambodia specially all those working tirelessly to ensure to make this event a great success. Last year we had the Commission meeting in the Maldives and we were celebrating 50 years of tourism in Maldives, our golden jubilee. At this juncture I would like to express our appreciation for all the delegates who joined us in the Maldives.

Hon Chair, Ladies and Gentleman, while our efforts globally have been focused on tourism recovery over the past 2 years, with technical, financial and different scopes of assistance from UNWTO and other international organizations, I believe we have proven that we can bounce back more resiliently and shift our thinking and mindset to pathways that will create a more sustainable future, a resilient tourism to all. This has been most prominently highlighted when World Tourism Day was marked by UNWTO under “Rethinking Tourism: From Crisis to Transformation” in 2022, emphasizing on the individual, collective and international efforts contributed to making tourism better globally.

Hon Chair, Ladies and Gentleman Tourist arrivals to the Maldives has been registering strong growths in 2023. While we welcomed more than half a million tourists during the first quarter of the year, the number reached **798,634 as of 29th May**, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

While Maldives is highly dependent on tourism as the main driver of the economy, contribution from other sectors and expansion of other sectors have played a key role in the strong economic performance of the country in 2022. *The country's growth moderated to an estimated 12.3% in 2022 following an extraordinary 41.7% rebound in 2021 driven by a tourism recovery*, increase of arrivals from 1.3 million in 2021 to 1.7 million in 2022.



Hon Chair, Ladies and Gentleman

International tourist's arrivals in Asia and Pacific also continued to rebound in the third quarter of 2022. While Maldives and Fiji remained as the key spots, travel restrictions eased throughout and additional countries in the Pacific Islands re-opened borders: Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Samoa. Specially opening of China borders, have given confidence and high potential and growth in the region for the coming months.

However, compared to other regions globally, Asia and the Pacific is still in nascent stages. As per the IMF Tourism Tracker *"Compared to the same period in 2019, tourist arrivals recovered by 26 percent by 2022Q3 in Asia and the Pacific, a modest recovery compared to the 65-86 percent recovery witnessed in other regions"*.

Hence, it is essential that we must have strong international and **regional cooperation** to support the economic growth regionally. **Destination promotion events** and activities need to intensify regionally to strengthen the marketing policies, increase competition, reputation and provide unique opportunities to boost tourism within the country and also within the region. **Air connectivity** needs to be addressed on a strict multilateral platform, with governments, tourism bodies, international and regional bodies to signify this is key to tourism transformation and attract millennials and young generations demanding shorter, frequent and easy travel options. Also, strategies need to be put in place to increase the **regional travel demand**, that will **stimulate confidence in travelers** at the same time encourage countries to put in **place robust sustainable tourism policies** that **protects tourists**, have **resilient tourism regulatory frameworks**, focus on **climate resilient practices** and promote **sustainable and responsible tourism** development.

I hope today's Commission Meeting and the Conference on the International Code for the Protection of Tourists we had yesterday has addressed the challenges, allowed us to share best practices and experiences that we can explore to fill these gaps to accelerate tourism recovery within our region and globally.

Thank You Chair and I wish for successful deliberations.