

**COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIRPERSON
H.E. DATO' SRI TIONG KING SING
MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE MALAYSIA**

**35TH JOINT MEETING OF THE UNWTO COMMISSION FOR EAST ASIA AND
THE PACIFIC AND COMMISSION FOR SOUTH ASIA (CAP-CSA)
PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA, 16 JUNE 2023**

Excellency Secretary-General, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili,
Honourable Ministers, Members of the Commissions, Distinguished
delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

1. First and foremost, it is my great pleasure and honour to address you on the occasion of the 35th CAP-CSA Joint Meeting, which comes at an opportune time for the global tourism industry and for the Asia-Pacific region in particular.
2. After three long years, travel and tourism is experiencing a rapid recovery which stands to gain further momentum following the WHO's recent declaration, bringing the COVID-19 global health emergency to a symbolic end in May 2023.
3. It is encouraging that international arrivals have reached 80% of pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of 2023, according to the World Tourism Barometer. Although recovery in Asia remains a year behind other regions, tourism continues to grow from strength to strength as an important driver in accelerating overall growth. In fact, according to The World Bank, tourism's robust performance in the region has supported growth in related sectors such as real estate, transport, and trade.
4. Of course, these developments were not without its challenges. The pandemic crisis revealed gaps in both government and industry preparedness responding to crises. During the height of the pandemic, the role of networks and communication inter-

and intra- agencies, survivability and agility among tourism industry operators, and the role of insurance for businesses to absorb and respond better to crises was given great emphasis and calls for further improvement.

5. It follows that our current priority for tourism as a vulnerable industry to crisis events must be geared towards building resilience, as well as responsiveness and preparedness for new or unforeseen challenges. We must be ready to capture growth opportunities in the short term and invest in the new capabilities and hardware for the long term.
6. Towards this end, Malaysia had the pleasure of co-organising the 6th World Tourism Conference (WTC) 2022 themed 'Tourism Futures Reimagined' in partnership with UNWTO on 28-30 November 2022 in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. Some key takeaways and recommendations from the expert speakers and delegates of the WTC 2022 include:
 - The increasingly blurred boundaries between work, home, leisure and travel require greater cross-collaboration with transport, health, security, cities and urban systems for greater liveability and quality of life, for both visitors and residents alike;
 - Successful efforts by governments and destinations have reached out beyond the sphere of tourism in offering flexible immigration policies, investing in health and education services, and enhancing economic opportunities for women, among other initiatives which contribute towards strengthening social protection;
 - The importance of a human-centred approach to rebuilding resilience, particularly in addressing the skilled labour shortages

which have affected the tourism sector's ability to meet surging pent-up demand; and

- It is worthwhile to emulate best practices in corporate governance and sustainability assessment tools such as ESG, which remain as yet uncharted waters for many tourism-related businesses largely comprising of small and micro enterprises in the Asia-Pacific region.
7. I hope you will seize the opportunity to deliberate on these issues and more throughout the course of this meeting. On that note, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to UNWTO for its tremendous support and initiatives in the past year, which includes an extensive Survey on Members' Priorities and Long Term Vision that will be discussed shortly.
 8. On behalf of the two Commissions, my heartfelt thanks once again to our gracious host, the Government of Cambodia for co-organising this year's regional meetings in Phnom Penh. These events have been nothing short of inspiring and we look forward to exchanging insights and strengthening ties towards further spurring tourism recovery and cooperation across the region.

Thank you.