H.E. Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, UNWTO Secretary-General,
H.E. Siandou Fofana, First Vice-Chair of the UNWTO Executive Council, Chair of the UNWTO
Commission for Africa, Minister of Tourism and Leisure of Côte d’Ivoire,
H.E. Louis Steven Obeegadoo, Second Vice-Chair of the UNWTO Executive Council, Deputy Prime
Minister, Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning and Minister of Tourism of Mauritius,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Council, Esteemed Ambassadors, Respected Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honored to address this esteemed gathering. First and foremost, I wish to extend our
heartfelt appreciation to His Excellency the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and His
Excellency the Minister of Ecology and Environmental Protection and Deputy Chair of the
Government Commission on Tourism Development, Aziz Abdulkhakimov, for their unparalleled
hospitality in hosting this pivotal Executive Council session. Our convening in this land of rich history
and cultural diversity serves as a living testament to the myriad opportunities that tourism brings to
communities worldwide.

I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to the UNWTO Secretary-General, the UNWTO Secretariat, and
the Vice-Chairs of the Executive Council. Our collaborative spirit has been a driving force behind the
success of this session. This past year has been marked by our collective efforts to amplify this
Council’s dialogue and impact.

Thank you as well to UNWTO for their tireless support in the successful World Tourism Day 2023
event in Riyadh. This successful gathering attracted over 740 attendees from 120+ countries,
showcased major investments, and welcomed 50 Heads of State and Ministers. It set new
benchmarks and exemplified tourism’s transformative impact by uniting global leaders and experts.

It is with deep appreciation and humility that I reflect upon my tenure as Chair of the 2023 UNWTO
Executive Council. Today, I am entrusted with both recapping our collective achievements and
envisioning our shared future.

At the 118th Executive Council, I had the honor of unveiling a strategic roadmap for the 2023
Executive Council. This roadmap, crafted through a close partnership with the UNWTO Secretary-
General, the Secretariat, and other key stakeholders, provided principles and foundations to guide
us forward. It helps ensure that present and future Executive Council sessions are linked to the
foremost priorities and necessities of our Member States and the overarching vision of the
organization. It is our aspiration that subsequent Executive Council chairs will consider this roadmap
as a foundation to build upon. The principles and commitments in the roadmap led to three key
outcomes:
1. **Consensus-Building through Online Preparatory Sessions**: Pursuing inclusivity and comprehensive representation, we organized online preparatory sessions on May 10th and 11th, 2023. These sessions aimed to give every stakeholder an opportunity to share opinions and ideas. Our objective was to ensure decisions truly reflect the diverse needs of all Member States. The collaborative spirit of these sessions was evident, with participation from 34 Member States, encompassing the full range of the UNWTO’s Regional Commissions and the UNWTO Secretariat—a turnout of over 85 attendees. By facilitating these discussions before the Executive Council meetings, we provided ample space for dialogue and negotiation. This allowed us to reach consensus on the full agenda in just 5 hours during our subsequent 118th Executive Council meeting in Punta Cana.

2. **Inclusive Agenda-Setting**: Emphasizing comprehensive representation, Saudi Arabia’s approach to aligning with all member states resulted in a 30% increase in the number of agenda items discussed during the 118th session. This underscores our commitment to fostering active Member State participation that covers all priorities and perspectives.

3. **Long-Term Strategic Focus with Continuous Oversight**: As part of our commitment to long-term strategic planning, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, supported by Spain, gained approval at the 24th General Assembly for the Task Force on Redesigning Tourism for the Future. Saudi Arabia was pivotal in garnering support for this initiative. As Chair of the Executive Council, Saudi Arabia consistently engaged with all Member States to finalize the Task Force’s Rules of Procedure. This collaborative spirit was evident in the two online preparatory sessions conducted in May. Beyond these group discussions, KSA organized individual consultations with each member state to ensure all voices were considered in the decision-making process. This inclusive approach was crucial for obtaining unanimous approval for the rules. Following this, regional commissions selected the nine members of the Task Force. These members will gather on October 20th in Samarkand for their inaugural meeting, where they will also elect the Chair and Vice-Chair. The creation of the Task Force represents a significant step toward providing the UNWTO with a robust long-term strategy setting a clear direction for the next five years.

Our goal is to elevate the UNWTO’s activities and impact on a global scale. As this approach has yielded significant successes, we recommend continuing to implement a three-step process for Executive Council meeting preparations:

1. **Agenda Setting**: Collect input from all Member States to develop an inclusive provisional agenda, ensuring it represents the varied perspectives of our global community.

2. **Decision Drafting**: Conduct online preparatory sessions, aiming for robust debates, constructive discussions, and achieving consensus. These sessions will pave the way for informed decision-making at the Executive Council session.

3. **Decision Adoption**: Discuss final points and promptly transition to decision-making, emphasizing efficiency and the attainment of our objectives.

The achievements of 2023 underscore the success of our roadmap. I extend my deepest appreciation to all Member States for partnering with us. The positive outcomes from the Executive Council Roadmap are a testament to its potential to guide the future. We are steadfast in our commitment to achieving the best outcomes through multilateral collaboration. May the legacy of the 2023 UNWTO Executive Council contribute to the flourishing and success of our nations through the tourism sector.