

Communication of the Chair at the 71st meeting of the UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Americas (CAM), Asunción, Paraguay

Excellencies, distinguished Ministers, tourism authorities, representatives of international organizations, colleagues and friends,

Allow me to begin by conveying our sincere gratitude to the **Government of the Republic of Paraguay** for its generous hospitality and for hosting the **71st meeting of the UN Tourism Commission for the Americas**, thereby providing a valuable space for dialogue, reflection and the collective shaping of the future of tourism in our region.

This meeting is particularly significant, as it is the **first session of the Commission for the Americas to be held under the leadership of the UN Tourism Secretary-General, Her Excellency Shaikha Al Nuwais**, marking the beginning of a new chapter for our Organization. It also carries historic significance, coinciding with an important milestone: **for the first time in its 50-year history, UN Tourism is led by a woman**, representing a meaningful step forward for leadership, inclusion and representation within the multilateral system.

In this context, and within the framework of the agenda promoted by UN Tourism in response to the sector's ongoing global transformation, we wish to offer a strategic reflection on the present and future of tourism in our region, while reaffirming our commitment to building a shared vision that strengthens its role as a driver of sustainable development.

Tourism continues to consolidate its position as one of the most dynamic sectors of our economies, generating employment, attracting investment and contributing significantly to social cohesion. The resilience demonstrated in recent years has confirmed its capacity not only to recover, but also to adapt to global challenges. Yet the present moment calls on us to move beyond recovery. It urges us to undertake a profound transformation that will enable us to build a tourism model that is more robust, inclusive and sustainable over the long term.

At the same time, we cannot overlook the impact of the current international context, marked by armed conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, which generate uncertainty in global tourism flows, affect air connectivity and influence travel decisions worldwide. These developments have a direct bearing on perceptions of safety and on the redistribution of global tourism demand.

Amid this complex landscape, the Americas face a **strategic opportunity**. Our region, broadly characterized by relative stability, diversity of destinations and a strong capacity to welcome visitors, is well placed to consolidate its position as an attractive and reliable destination for global tourism flows. This will, however, require coordinated action aimed at positioning the Americas as a region defined by trust, hospitality, safety and sustainability.

The Americas possess exceptional conditions to lead this new stage. Its cultural diversity, natural wealth and growing capacity for innovation are strategic assets that, if effectively coordinated, can place the region at the centre of global tourism. To achieve this, we must advance an approach grounded in sustainability, resilience, inclusion and the creation of added value, supported by sound public policies and closer coordination among our countries.

Sustainability must remain the cross-cutting axis of all our actions. Our territories are home to ecosystems of critical importance to the planet's environmental balance, as well as to cultural heritage of extraordinary value. Tourism development must therefore ensure the protection of these assets through the effective integration of local communities and the equitable distribution of the benefits derived from this activity.

Connectivity and travel facilitation also remain among the region's principal structural challenges. Limited intra-regional air connectivity and migration procedures that continue to create barriers directly affect the sector's competitiveness. It is therefore imperative to expand routes, simplify processes and adopt technological solutions that facilitate mobility, while treating connectivity as a shared strategic priority.

At the same time, the digital transformation of tourism offers significant opportunities that must be seized with determination. The use of data analysis tools, the digitalization of services and the development of smart tourism destinations can enhance

competitiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Innovation must be understood as a central pillar of contemporary tourism policy.

The diversification of tourism offerings is another fundamental pillar. The Americas have extraordinary potential to develop products that go beyond traditional models, including segments such as cultural, nature, gastronomy, sports and meetings tourism. Such diversification will help broaden markets, reduce seasonality, increase expenditure per visitor and strengthen local economies.

This process also requires an enabling environment for investment. Strengthening public-private partnerships, promoting sustainable financing mechanisms, and working closely with multilateral and financial institutions will be essential to developing modern, resilient infrastructure aligned with the principles of sustainability.

People must remain at the centre of this effort. Tourism is, by its very nature, a profoundly human sector. Training, capacity-building and improved working conditions are essential to ensuring service quality and the sustainability of growth. Particular attention should be given to the inclusion of young people, women and local communities, ensuring their active participation throughout the value chain.

Security and resilience remain essential to strengthening the sector. Travellers' confidence depends on our countries' ability to provide safe environments and to respond effectively to crises of all kinds, including health and climate-related emergencies.

In this context, regional cooperation is of fundamental importance. A shared agenda will strengthen the region's capacities, promote the exchange of good practices and help us move towards a stronger position on the international stage. UN Tourism plays a key role as a platform for dialogue and coordination, facilitating consensus-building and the development of joint initiatives.

Within this strategic vision, hosting the UN Tourism General Assembly in 2027 in the Dominican Republic represents a historic opportunity for the Americas. This event will place the region at the centre of the global tourism debate, strengthen multilateralism and project a renewed vision of tourism rooted in sustainability, innovation and cooperation. It also offers a timely opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to a tourism model that responds to current challenges and contributes to the well-being of our societies.

Our aspiration is for this General Assembly to mark a turning point, establishing itself as a space for closer cooperation, consensus-building and the projection of a more humane, inclusive and sustainable vision of tourism at the global level. Its success will depend, to a large extent, on our region's ability to move forward in a coordinated manner and with a common purpose from this moment onward.

In light of the foregoing, we reaffirm our commitment to continue working together, under the leadership of UN Tourism, to strengthen tourism as an instrument of development, integration and shared prosperity. The Americas possess the potential, the resources and the determination to exercise leadership on the international stage. The time has come to translate this capacity into concrete action and to build a stronger, more equitable and more sustainable future for the sector.

Please accept the assurances of our highest consideration.