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Seventy-second meeting
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Agenda item 2:

Communication of the Chair (Montenegro)

Distinguished Secretary-General Al Nuwais,

Distinguished Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission for Europe,

Dear colleagues – representatives of the UN Tourism Member States, Associate Members of UN Tourism,

Distinguished colleagues from the UN Tourism Secretariat,

It is my great pleasure to address you on behalf of Montenegro and the Ministry of Tourism, and today also in my capacity as Chair of the UN Tourism Commission for Europe, as I preside over its 72nd meeting.

I would especially like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr Borg and to Malta for their outstanding organisation and hospitality. Your commitment has reaffirmed the importance of international cooperation and the role that multilateralism, as well as this Commission, plays in shaping the future of tourism in today's world. By assuming the Chairmanship in June last year, Montenegro also undertook the responsibility to actively contribute to strengthening regional cooperation and coordination among Member States. As this is my first official address to all Member States, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for the support you extended to us in Baku and throughout the various activities during the past year.

In a time of global challenges, all of us together, led by the UN Tourism Secretariat, must do considerably more to ensure that meetings such as today's are utilised in the best possible way, so that legitimate decisions may be adopted at the highest political level, containing clear guidance and recommendations for the tourism industry and the system as a whole.

For Montenegro, 2026 represents an important milestone in the process of European integration. Our evident progress in closing negotiation chapters and aligning with European standards is directly reflected in tourism – the sector that plays a dominant role in the transformation of our country. The introduction of EU standards across a broad range of policies, together with our prospective membership in the European Union, provides greater security for investors, improved market connectivity, and stronger recognition of Montenegro as a destination that embraces the values of sustainable and high-quality tourism.

Our objective is clear – stable and competitive tourism that generates long-term value, alongside stronger cooperation with European countries.

I would like to remind you that Europe remains the world's leading tourism destination. According to the UN Tourism Barometer, approximately 808 million international arrivals were recorded, representing an increase of 8% compared to the record year of 2019 and 5% compared to 2024. A further growth of around 6% is projected for 2026, thereby reaffirming Europe's position as a global leader in tourism.

At the same time, we are facing significant challenges – economic pressures, rising travel costs, and geopolitical uncertainty. This is precisely why it is important to strengthen communication and coordination at the European level, in order to fully utilise the potential of tourism and generate additional value for our economies.

In a time of global crises, I would particularly like to emphasise that peace is the fundamental

prerequisite for the development, stability, and success of tourism. We all share the hope that conflicts and humanitarian crises, will come to an end as soon as possible, and that dialogue and cooperation will prevail. Tourism has always served as a bridge connecting people, cultures, and nations regardless of their differences; however, without peace there can be no travel, and without travel there can be no tourism. For this very reason, it is our shared responsibility to preserve, through international cooperation, the values of openness, understanding, and mutual respect.

In order for Europe to maintain its position as a global leader in tourism, the priority of our Chairmanship is to strengthen cooperation within the European region, as well as with other regions, through closer engagement with the European Commission, the Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, and other relevant international partners.

Particular focus remains on the sustainability of destinations in the context of climate change, the preservation of natural and cultural resources, and the application of digitalisation and artificial intelligence in order to strengthen the resilience and competitiveness of the tourism sector. At the same time, it is important to encourage investment, reinforce public-private partnerships, and provide support to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

Among our key priorities also remain addressing the challenges of overtourism through the diversification of tourism offerings and the reduction of seasonality, as well as enhancing the knowledge and skills of the workforce.

In addition, we are also working on three new projects for the next cycle of the Agenda for Europe – focusing on women, innovation in wine tourism, and stronger regional cooperation in South-East Europe.

Contemporary tourism is evolving rapidly. Today's travellers are increasingly less inclined to spend their entire journey in a single destination, and are instead seeking opportunities to experience several countries, cultures, and experiences within one trip. This is precisely why regional cooperation is becoming a key factor in the success of modern tourism today.

Guided by this idea, together with our colleagues from the region, we launched the "Bridging Destinations" initiative under the message: "My guest is also your guest." We believe that by connecting destinations, we are creating a stronger and more competitive tourism offer, to the benefit of all our economies and local communities.

At the same time, it is equally important to strengthen cooperation between continents, as we share common challenges and interests – from labour shortages and workforce education to digital transformation and the sustainable development of tourism.

I would particularly like to highlight that Montenegro, in cooperation with the UN Tourism Secretariat, will host the Interregional Forum of Europe and Asia in October 2026. The Forum will serve as a platform for strengthening cooperation between the regions and encouraging tourism flows, with a focus on joint products and access to long-haul markets.

In parallel, we will organise an investment event and present the publication "Tourism Doing Business: Investing in Montenegro" as a concrete instrument for attracting new investments. This will be the eighth edition of this prestigious guide dedicated to a European country, offering a unique overview of Montenegro's opportunities and potential. Our country is already home to some of the world's most distinguished hotel brands; however, at the same time, we recognise the space and opportunities for new investments, which will make this guide a valuable instrument for all interested investors.

And therefore – you are all warmly invited to Montenegro! It will be our great pleasure to welcome you and present not only the investment potential of our country, but also our hospitality, culture, and the values that we share through tourism.

I would also like to remind you that Montenegro has submitted its candidacy to host the next meeting of the Commission for Europe in 2027, through which we aim to further strengthen the continuity and achievements of our Chairmanship and conclude our two-year mandate with several initiatives that we have already launched or are currently preparing.

Montenegro lives sustainability. To the European tourism offer, we bring what is becoming increasingly valuable today – preserved nature, authentic gastronomy that is not the product of mass industry, as well as a way of life through which we preserve our culture and identity.

It is precisely through such an approach that we strengthen local communities developing modern tourism – tourism that does not consume or destroy resources but rather preserves and enriches them for future generations.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Conclusions and recommendations CEU/CR/2 (LXXII)¹

The Commission for Europe,

- Having heard the Communication of the Chair, delivered by H.E. Ms. Simonida Kordić, Minister of Tourism of Montenegro,
1. Expresses its appreciation to the Chair of the Commission for Europe for her leadership and commitment to advancing the work of UN Tourism and the strategic priorities of the Commission for Europe;
 2. Acknowledges that Europe maintains its position as the world's leading tourism destination while remaining mindful of the significant challenges currently facing the sector, including economic pressures, rising travel costs and geopolitical uncertainty;
 3. Reaffirms that peace is the fundamental prerequisite for the development, stability and success of tourism, and underscores the shared responsibility of Member States to preserve the values of openness, understanding and mutual respect;
 4. Welcomes the initiative of Montenegro to organize an Interregional Forum of Europe and Asia in October 2026 as a platform for strengthening interregional cooperation on matters of mutual interest.

¹ This is a draft of the conclusions and recommendations for the corresponding agenda item. For the final text adopted by the Commission, please refer to the Conclusions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.