



**CLOSING ADDRESS & CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE
TALEB RIFAI, SECRETARY-GENERAL
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION (UNWTO)**

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

**PATA ANNUAL SUMMIT
(BANGKOK, THAILAND, 26 APRIL 2013)**

H.E. Mr. Somsak Pureesrisak, Minister of Tourism and Sport, Thailand
My good friend João Manuel Costa Antunes, Chairman, PATA
My dear friend Martin Craigs, CEO of PATA
My dearest Gloria Guevara, Former Secretary of Tourism of Mexico
Honorable Speakers and Moderators
Ladies and Gentlemen
Dear friends

- Thank Martin Craigs for warm hospitality, long and fruitful collaboration.
- Pleasure to be back in Thailand – your hospitality and warm welcome is next to none.
- Happy to be addressing this top-level conference of tourism representatives hosted by an Organization so close to UNWTO.

Dear friends,

- Year after year, PATA hosts a number of key events in the region and of all of them; this Annual Summit is perhaps the most important one. Today high-level representatives from the travel and tourism sector have come together to discuss how to embrace what PATA calls the “Complete Visitor Economy”.
- Indeed, the tourism sector is unique in its makeup. By embracing many industries tourism is by nature multidimensional and fragmented.
- Working together is thus imperative in developing tourism globally - with strong collaboration we can raise awareness of the sector’s still under-valued importance; with strong collaboration we can continue to see the sector grow; and with strong collaboration we can sustain this growth in a responsible and sustainable way.
- Our shared goals, combined efforts and strong partnerships are the keys for moving the global tourism agenda forward.

International tourism as a major world sector

Dear friends,

- We meet today against a backdrop of continued global economic volatility, environmental challenges and rapid socio-cultural shifts. Despite this, the tourism sector continues grow.
- The numbers speak for themselves – 1 billion international tourists travelled in 2012 and spent US\$ 1,075 billion. Today, tourism generates 9% of the world’s GDP with its direct and indirect impacts, accounts for 30% of the world’s exports of services and creates one in every 11 jobs.

- These numbers flow on to boost economic growth and social progress and encourage the global shift toward greater sustainability – if managed well.
- Yet, these numbers and the impact they have on the ground are often not fully understood or translated into policies that support the growth of our sector.
- This is a challenge, which we at UNWTO and our friends at PATA as well as leaders of other organizations in the sector have come to recognize; a challenge that has brought us together over recent years to align our advocacy efforts and speak with one voice.
- Today, I would like to highlight two initiatives that we have been developing in this regard:
 1. The *UNWTO/WTTC Open Letter on Travel and Tourism*: UNWTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) have been jointly presenting heads of state and government around the world with an Open Letter calling them to acknowledge tourism's key role in delivering a more sustainable and balanced growth and to prioritize the sector high in national policies in order to maximize its potential.

This is just one way in which we have been able to send a message to the world to accord high priority to the development of tourism for promoting employment and economic development. So far, 49 countries have come aboard since the campaign's inception in early 2011 and I must praise my dearest friend Gloria Guevara for her vision in this regard as thanks to her, the President of Mexico Felipe Calderon was the first to accept the UNWTO/WTTC Open Letter.

2. The *Travel and Tourism Association Coalition*: UNWTO has joined WTTC, PATA and other major associations such as IATA and CLIA to align the messaging of the sector and make sure we have a louder voice when we speak about the economic impact of tourism and what policies it requires to continue growing.

A key moment to make key choices

Dear Friends

- We have before us a crucial, and maybe unique, opportunity to advance tourism's contribution to a fairer and more sustainable growth, and to take the lead on the global stage as a sector that helps to create a brighter future.
- Tourism benefits many aspects of our lives – the economy, social progress, job creation, poverty alleviation and environmental preservation. These benefits need to be highlighted at the highest level.
- It is clear that global challenges require strong partnerships. For the tourism sector to be seen as a positive agent for change, we need to acknowledge the mistakes of the past, consider the challenges which lie ahead and work together to bring positive changes through tourism to the communities and ecosystems of this varied planet.
- With collaborative, planned and well-managed teamwork, we can ensure that tourism is the sector which leads the way in a new era of fairer, stronger and more sustainable growth and development.
- On this journey, partnerships are key. Whether it is the transport, accommodation, communication or logistics industry, the public or private sector or academia and practice, the only way to advance tourism is to work together.
- It is within this collaborative spirit that UNWTO and PATA have been working together for many years.

- PATA has been a key partner in UNWTO's push to advocate responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- As we look toward the next decade of travel and tourism development, the strong partnership already existing between our two organizations will help to align priorities and spur the sector forward.
- With PATA, the leading voice and authority on travel and tourism in Asia and the Pacific, UNWTO has embarked on a number of initiatives which seek to raise the agenda of tourism at a regional and global level; these include:
 1. **Joint advocacy:** We have been working hard in uniting our voices confident that by coordinating messages our voice will stronger.
 2. **The UNWTO/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook:** This forum, to be held for the 7th time this year in the Chinese city of Guilin, is organized annually by UNWTO and PATA to provide a platform for government, industry and academic representatives to analyze current global trends in the travel sector as well as future directions for the industry. Only with hard data can we make leaders understand our sector; cooperation in this area is thus critical.
 3. **Joint Study on Air Connectivity:** UNWTO and PATA have just embarked on a new study which seeks to comprehensively review the link between tourism and air transport, identify key trends, challenges, opportunities and policy initiatives to foster sustainable development in tourism and air transport. The findings will surely support our advocacy work in the area of connectivity and help bring tourism and aviation, sectors too often disconnected, closer together for their mutual benefit.

Dear Friends,

- Looking back, I think we have made important strides.
- We are working together to ensure we coordinate our messages and our agendas; we have brought private and public sector together and our voice is starting to be heard by those who decide as was the case with the inclusion of tourism for the first time ever in the G20 leaders declaration last year with a clear mention to the role of tourism in economic growth and job creation; yet the road ahead is still long.
- Today we are here to look ahead to the future of our sector. With such an opportunity to join heads, hands and voices, I trust that we can continue to strive ahead to ensure tourism is a catalyst for positive change.

Thank you.

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