Mauritius Declaration on Digitalisation and Sustainable Tourism, Le Meridien, Pointe aux Piments, Republic of Mauritius, 24 May 2018

PREAMBLE

Acknowledging the economic potential of tourism whereby the tourism sector accounts for 10% of global GDP, 10% of total employment worldwide and 7% of the world's exports, equivalent to USD 1.4 trillion in 2016. International tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million in 1950 to 1.322 billion in 2017 and tourism receipts attained USD 1.2 trillion. It is forecasted that by 2030 international tourist arrivals would reach 1.8 billion;

Taking note that for many countries, especially developing and small island economies, tourism is a major economic pillar and an important source of foreign currency earnings. Governments across the world are leveraging tourism as an engine of economic growth and a driver for economic diversification;

Recalling the UN Conference on Small Islands Developing States (the SAMOA Pathway 2014) recognition that sustainable tourism represents an important driver of sustainable economic growth and decent job creation, which strongly supports Small Island Developing States.

Recalling the Conference of Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015 (the "Paris Agreement") for the need to improve transparency in emissions reporting, strengthening resilience of countries with a view to reducing the vulnerability to climate change;

Bearing in mind that all stakeholders need to acknowledge that sustainable tourism implies, *inter-alia*,

    a. the optimum use of environmental resources;

    b. respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of the host communities;

    c. viable, long term economic operations; and

    d. the provision of socio-economic benefits including stable employment;

Considering that tourism is one of the driving forces of global economic growth;

Re-affirming that tourism must adopt sustainable consumption and production, develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable impacts and to promote local culture and products;

Further re-affirming that especially for small island developing states, coastal and maritime tourism rely on healthy marine ecosystems and the promotion of an integrated coastal zone management aiming at our priorities for a sustainable Blue Economy;

Taking note that the General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR") of the European Union is coming into force on 25 May 2018 and recognising its implications in the tourism industry;

Recognising that the rapid progress in Information Communication Technology and the fact that digitalisation of the tourism sector is impacting destinations by bringing new challenges and opportunities to host countries, private providers and customers;

Being aware of a new generation of tourists (Gen Y –Millennials and Gen Z) which will constitute 50% of travel by 2025 and the need for host destinations and its tourism organisations to embrace new technology at all levels of the tourism value chain;

Acknowledging that information technology provides several opportunities to promote sustainable tourism by allowing destinations:

   a. to develop evidence-based policies;

   b. to better manage their resources through the use of ICT platforms; and

   c. to improve the timely measurement of the impacts of tourism;

Being conscious that digital adaptation is indispensable for destination promotion and management in order to respond to the ever ending consumer demands and needs;

Further recognising digitalisation as an opportunity for businesses to reinvent their service products and towards this end to initiate actions for training and acquiring new skills;

We, the delegates, gathered at Le Meridien, Pointe aux Piments, launch the following appeal:

1. to create a Working Group on Digital Platforms aimed at identifying, analysing and proposing a balanced approach, exchanging best practices and helping in developing regulatory framework and policies to create a level playing field for tourism service suppliers;

2. to promote and diversify sustainable tourism by including the development of ecotourism, agro-tourism, medical tourism and cultural tourism;

3. to ensure that there are necessary national regulatory and policy frameworks that require the tourism industry to protect the privacy of visitors;

4. to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union, the Travel and Tourism Industry shall take proper steps in collecting consumers' data with their explicit consent and protecting same during any transfer from Europe to any countries;

5. to acquire adequate and coordinated support from tourism operators to keep policy-makers and regulators aligned on recent developments thereby narrowing the gap between innovation and regulation;

6. to ensure the transition of the workforce by reskilling current employees through training;

7. to consider the rigorous application of "Green ICT" techniques to ensure minimal environmental impact being given that a connected world together managing the resulting data will in itself impose an environmental load;

8. to optimise the use of geoinformatics technologies for the conservation and promotion of cultural heritage;

9. to establish an Indian Ocean Agency on "Climate Change and protection and conservation of the biodiversity"; and

10. to invite International Organisations to provide financial and technical support to developing countries and small island economies to fully embrace Information Communication Technology in sustainable tourism.

Adopted on 24 May 2018 in Pointe aux Piments, Republic of Mauritius