Dear Minister Weykmans,

Firstly, let us acknowledge the European Union for recognising travel and tourism as one of the hardest-hit sectors by the COVID-19 crisis, as stated last night by President von der Leyen, and thank particularly Commissioner Breton for implementing measures to support the industry during this unprecedented crisis.

The European Union is the largest region in the world in terms of international tourism receipts. In 2019, tourism-related spending in the EU reached 427 billion Euros, representing 6.2% of the EU’s total exports. Last year, the Travel & Tourism sector was responsible for more than 27 million jobs, showing how intrinsic and important the sector is to the European economy.

We have recently seen some excellent individual initiatives and leadership from countries and governments around the world, and we believe that full and swift recovery will only be achieved through common efforts and strong public-private collaboration. Therefore, we see the upcoming Tourism Council meeting as a great opportunity for joint commitment to a coordinated approach that will enable faster recovery of the sector.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial to work together to mobilise all the tools at our disposal to respond to this pandemic. The European Travel Commission (ETC), the non-profit organisation responsible for the promotion of Europe as a tourist destination in third markets, and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), which represents the global Travel & Tourism private sector, call on Ministers to lead and drive a united and coordinated recovery response to the COVID-19 crisis. We propose tourism ministers to jointly commit to four key principles to achieve a faster recovery:

1. **A common response and well-coordinated approach across the EU** – to re-establish effective operations, remove travel barriers, reopen borders, and reinstall Schengen, and to re-build confidence in Travel & Tourism. Following EU guidelines and public-private cooperation will be crucial in this regard.

2. **Recovery plan** – Enhance the seamless traveller journey experience, combining the latest technology and protocols to increase health standards evenly across all EU Member States. Consider the “new normal” for the sector with components of health, security, hygiene and sustainability with a traveller centric approach.

3. **Industry toolbox to resume travel in Europe** – Work with the private sector and health experts to define global standards for the new normal, grounded in science and developed together with the industry. Protocols should be developed in a way that can be adopted by businesses of every size across all travel industries and can be implemented in Europe and worldwide.
4. Supportive measures – Continue to aid and assist to the Travel & Tourism sector during the recovery phase, throughout the entire travel ecosystem. Governments should not spare financial support for workers, businesses and for promotion in order to achieve a prompt recovery.

The EU Member States have the power to influence and drive forward a coordinated recovery effort needed to preserve the sector. Once the COVID-19 pandemic has been put under control, governments should focus on attracting visitors back and offering reassurance to travellers that the time is right once more to explore and visit. The Travel & Tourism sector will be powering the recovery of the EU economy, generating new jobs and fresh income much needed in the prospected economic downturn.

ETC and WTTC stand ready to work with you and your government in whichever way we can, to overcome the present challenges. Please feel free to contact us if you have any comments or questions.

We truly hope that the resilience of the Travel & Tourism sector will support a rapid recovery.

Best regards,

Gloria Guevara Manzo
President & CEO
World Travel & Tourism Council

Eduardo Santander
Executive Director & CEO
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