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Written statement for the European Tourism Convention: For a sustainable, innovative and resilient tourism sector

As the minister responsible for tourism policy within the Swedish Government, I sincerely appreciate the opportunity given by Commissioner Breton to contribute to the discussion at the European Tourism Convention through a written statement. I hope the dialogue will be fruitful and contribute to a recovery towards a sustainable, innovative and resilient tourism sector. As tourism has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, crisis management is taking up a great deal of our time. However, it is of the utmost importance that we also use this time for long-term strategic development to unlock the sector's potential.

The Commissioner has asked me to focus on two questions:

- (i) What are the main challenges for European tourism in the next 10–20 years?
- (ii) What investment priorities are necessary for the sustainable recovery and resilience of the EU tourism ecosystem?

Main challenges

The COVID-19 crisis will most probably change the tourism sector in the long term as well. Enterprises must adapt to a new environment and become more resilient to future crises.

Apart from demonstrating the crucial need for predictability and transparency when it comes to border restrictions and to restoring people's confidence in travelling, the crisis has accelerated the need for change towards sustainability. The overall challenge is to reach the objective of an

economically, socially and environmentally sustainable industry, an industry that takes responsibility for its present as well as future impact by considering not only the needs of visitors and enterprises, but also the needs of local communities.

An *economically* sustainable tourism sector is competitive and responsible and ensures long-term and adaptive resource management. The sector creates jobs, contributes to economic growth and regional development, and strengthens the opportunities of local communities.

A *socially sustainable* tourism sector contributes to viable cities and communities that consider tangible and intangible cultural heritage, minority cultures and local businesses. For enterprises and employees in the sector, social sustainability means skills development, decent working conditions, a good work environment and equality.

An *environmentally* sustainable tourism sector takes responsibility for the climate and resources, for example through efficient energy and water consumption, responsible use of the landscape and its resources, and sustainable transport.

Investment priorities

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, we were in the process of finalising a national strategy for sustainable tourism. We now need to review this strategy in the light of the current crisis. To support the restart of the tourism industry, the Government has put forward proposals including skills development, business development, enhanced adaptability in companies, nature-based tourism and marketing.

Innovation is crucial to achieving the transition towards a sustainable society and addressing complex challenges, both now and in the future. Global competition, rapid change and complex value chains require innovation capacity. A key to promoting innovation within tourism is working across sectors to link knowledge-intensive environments, actors in the innovation support system, public and private institutions, and enterprises in the tourism sector. It is also important to facilitate the uptake of new technologies by small and medium-sized enterprises and accelerate the digital transformation through skills development.

At European level, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and its focus on green and digital investments and reforms will be crucial for the restart of European economies. In the longer term, as we move towards a resilient and sustainable tourism sector, EU measures should have clear added value in relation to national measures and should focus on broader analysis, statistics, sustainable development, digital transformation and simplification efforts for the tourism sector. We must also benefit from collaboration within the Union to share knowledge, information and best practices among Member States.