

Honorable Minister, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentleman

It is with great pleasure that I am representing the European Parliament during this concluding Plenary Session of the 5th European Tourism Forum.

Please accept the apologies of Mr. Paolo Costa, Chairman of the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee, who regrettably had to refrain from participating in the Forum due to last minute family reasons.

The European Parliament is very active in the tourism field through its Transport and Tourism Committee. The Committee is keen on giving wider exposure to the tourism industry and maintains a regular dialogue with the DG Enterprise and Industry's Tourism Unit in discussing the main challenges which lie ahead for the Industry. Its direct involvement has led to the Parliament's so-called Quiero report on Tourism, and is now in the process of giving a formal opinion on the Commission's Renewed Tourism Policy Communication as issued earlier on this year. Additional European Parliament initiatives have also led to the organisation of specific meetings, such as the one on seasonality, with the participation of the Commission but also of the main stakeholders in the industry.

The interest of the European Parliament for this sector was also clearly manifested with the approval of the pilot project "European Destinations of Excellence" that has a budget of 1 million euros. I know that the Commission is now implementing the recommendations of the European Parliament regarding this highly interesting project.

The above is just a snapshot of the European Parliament's involvement in Tourism.

Parliament especially welcomes the Commission's Communication on Tourism since it gives a clear signal on the increasing role that Tourism can play within

the competitive and sustainable environment which forms such an integral part of the Lisbon strategy. Parliament's involvement is such that it will be Mr. Costa himself to take a personal interest in the opinion by acting as rapporteur for the Committee in producing this opinion.

Parliament will gladly continue collaborating with the Commission in raising awareness on the main issues pertaining to the tourism industry, and will also support initiatives like the European Tourism Forum which brings together stakeholders from all over the Europe to discuss topical subjects.

Indeed Parliament can be the ideal catalyst in bringing together stakeholders within the Tourism Industry, being a legal institution elected democratically to represent the general public, and obviously the stakeholders themselves. In this way, the collaboration with the Commission and in particular its Tourism Unit, can be ameliorated, since Parliament would strengthen even further its current position as the general public's voice.

Thank you for your attention.