

1. Minister of State, Excellency Mr. Claude Alphonse SILOU - your presence
  
1. Minister of Tourism and Leisure, Mme Arlette Soudan-Nonault, good friend , -
  
1. Resident Coordinator of the United Nations and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Anthony KWAKU OHEMENG-BOAMAH
  
1. Minister , Ambassadors,
  
1. Distinguished guests,
  
1. Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Congo,

Welcome to Brazzaville

Dear Friends

Charles Darwin once said:

“It is not the strongest , or the most intelligent , who will survive,  
but those who can best manage change.”

Today, the world is fast changing

The world is at a major transformation juncture, and

Change is the essence of our time

Two major global transformation forces are leading this change,

Two Revolutions are changing the world as we know it,

1. The digital Mobile revolution

2. The Travel revolution

Dear Friends,

In 1950, there were 25 million travelers crossing international borders, in that year, mostly within the rich industrialized economies.

In 2016, last year, there were 1235 million travelers crossed international borders in one year,

Almost 1/6 of the people of the world make an international trip every year .

Millions of people travel today despite tremendous challenges

- . Security
- Economy
- Health pandemics
- Natural disasters

With more than 1.2 Billion international travelers per year, tourism today is contributing tremendous benefits to communities, economies and societies all over the world,

- Generating \$ 3.2 billion of global spending every day
- Creating 1/10 jobs all over the world
- Representing 10.2 % of world GDP
- And 30% of world trade in services
- Developing infrastructure
- Boosting trade
- Providing new opportunities for social progress and social inclusion

Travel and tourism is today the 3rd largest export industry in the world after chemicals and fuels.

By 2030, UNWTO forecast 1.8 billion international travelers will be crossing borders in that year.

People are defying all odds and traveling the world,

Travel has become today a way of life

It is not any more just a human need or urge but, has become today a

Human Right

My right ,

To, Enjoy the world,

To, Relax

To, do business

To, seek healthcare

To, seek education

In 40, 50, 60 years from now , I therefore, believe that ,  
the future generations will look back at this time and age, and say

"That was the Age of Travel "

Dear Friends,

But

With growth comes power, and,  
with power, comes responsibility,

With 1.8 billion travelers,

We could end up with  
1.8 B opportunities, or 1.8 B disasters

With 1.8 Billion travelers, we must, therefore, ensure that today ,  
this fascinating 21st century human activity translates into,

1. Opportunities for inclusive economic growth - Buy local
2. Opportunities for more and better jobs , decent jobs. - hire local

3. Opportunities to protect our natural and cultural heritage - use tourism revenue
4. Opportunities to better know and respect each other. - inquire and engage
5. Opportunities to bond people, bond hearts and minds - reach out
6. Opportunities to distribute wealth and share prosperity - spend fairly

These opportunities, my Friends, are the essence of our meeting today

They are the essence of Africa , The future of Africa

Dear Friends,

In 2015 , the UNGA accomplished three very important milestones,

1. The 17 SDG , a roadmap to 2030 were approved
2. The Paris agreement was agreed
3. 2017 was designated as

" The international year of sustainable tourism for development"

2017 is, therefore, a very special year for us in the travel and tourism industry,

and a unique opportunity for all of us to come together to promote the contributions of travel and tourism as a grand 21st century human activity,

to shape a better future for people and planet

The question today remains ,

How can we best enable this transformative force, called Travel & Tourism

to contribute to the global sustainable development agenda of the IY 2017 in all its 5 pillars , namely,

- 1.Economic. - inclusive growth, leakages
- 2.Social - decent jobs and community empowerment
- 3.Environmental. - preservation, environmental enrichment and climate change
- 4.Cultured. - identity, tangible and intangible cultural preservation
- 5.Peace - as an essential prerequisite for development and progress.

How can Travel and Tourism contribute meaningfully to this agenda ?

In responding to this question,

We have to understand that to become relevant, as a sector, we have to be relevant to all other sectors and other factors contributing to the sustainable development agenda,

The SDG's

Dear friends,

Being in a country of immense natural beauty,such as the Congo,

I would like to focus briefly on tourism's role in environmental protection,

1. We need to raise awareness on the urgency to protect and restore biodiversity,
2. We need to engage the local communities,
3. We need to integrate environmental protection policies into national policies .

This is particularly true of countries like Congo,

Which has such a wealth of natural species that are important to the global fight for biodiversity and conservation.

The American senator and environmental advocate John Dingell once said:

“Living wild species are like a library of books still unread.

Destroying them is like burning the library without ever reading its books.”

Thankfully, not only is Environmental Sustainability high on the agenda of the IY but it is also central to Congo’s tourism strategy.

Dear Friends,

Today, In our globalized, interconnected world, strengthening global partnership is crucial.

Global challenges can only be addressed through global partnerships

platforms such as this important gathering are opportunities

to strengthen partnerships and commitments ,and

to address together the challenges of the day

A good example is the " Blue Fund "

With the launch of the Blue Fund,  
to preserve the forests, the crucial carbon sinks, of the Congo Basin,  
comes a new opportunity for global partnerships  
and international financing

There are , however some prerequisites ,

Three urgent steps for Congo's tourism sector to effectively contribute to creating a 'Blue Economy' are:

1. Use tourism to help decouple economic growth from environmental degradation
2. Link tourism with other sectors, , particularly, ensuring its integration into national development plans and policies
3. Create dialogue with all tourism stakeholders, particularly the local communities.

These steps will enable the growing travel and tourism sector in Congo to contribute to a better life for the people of Congo.

Because this, my Friends, is what sustainability is all about.

Sustainability means to sustain LIFE on earth .

for our children and grand children to progress and prosper in a responsible way.

It's not just to preserve our natural and cultural assets

where we live,

How we live ,and

who we are ,

Not just for the sake of preservation ,

But rather to preserve in order to elevate LIFE on earth to a higher level of progress and quality of life for people .

In essence, it's all about people

That, my Friends, is the real challenge.

Growth and sustainability,

Development and responsibility

Progress and preservation

Going hand in hand

Not, either - or ,

BUT a win- win way of life

Dear friends,

As we launch today the National Strategy and Sustainable Tourism Development Master Plan, it is very encouraging seeing all of you gathered here supporting the Strategy, and in turn supporting the people of Congo.

This product is a result of hard work by

The Government of the Republic of Congo,

The United Nations Development Program , and

The UNWTO

UNWTO is currently working with the Government of the Republic of Congo on the following two priorities of the strategy:

1. Bringing tourism data collection and statistics up to international standards, to be able to draw the right policies, goals and objectives.
2. Classifying hotels in accordance with international standards, to enable Congo to market and promote quality, competitive tourism services

Dear friends,

One final thought ,

We all came out of Africa, and went on to inhabit the world.

Making Africa indeed the first source market in history.

This is the continent that gave birth to three other continents.

And gave the gift of life to the rest of the world .

A grand lesson to all those who today sing the hymn of isolation and bigotry

Building walls and separating people.

To them We say,.....

Come to Africa, see and learn the simple truth.

We are ONE

Dear Friends

We do become better people when we travel,

When we travel,

our eyes open,

our hearts open,

our minds open

and all stereotypes are shattered.

Because there is nothing more powerful than people coming together

rubbing shoulders and

creating in the process a new world.

Dear friends,

whatever our business in life is,

Our core business,

is and must always be ,

To make this world a better place .

In conclusion,

Let me share with you this one minute video designed and produced by UNWTO ,for the IYST 2017 ,entitled

TRAVEL , ENJOY , RESPECT

VOYAGE. APRECIE. RESPECTE.

respect the people

respect the society ,

respect the culture,

respect the nature

Respect the history

Respect Africa .

because in doing so , we are in essence respecting ourselves

Africa, my friends, is the Future and

Congo is its soul and heart

Thank you

and God bless you.

Merci