



**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION  
PRESS RELEASE**

**AFRICA AFFIRMS ITS SUPPORT FOR DR WALTER MZEMBI AS THE  
CONTINENT'S CANDIDATE FOR THE POST OF SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS WORLD TOURISM ORGANISATION**



**Geneva, Switzerland, 22 February 2017-** At a meeting held on 22 February 2017 in Geneva, the Ambassadors of the African Group in Geneva have affirmed their support for the candidature of Dr Walter Mzembi as Africa's candidate for the post of Secretary General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

Led by the Ambassador of Chad in his capacity as Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps in Geneva, the African Group, which comprises the Ambassadors of 51 African Union member states accredited to the United Nations Organisations in Geneva, made statements of support and encouragement on behalf of their respective governments and the African continent as a whole.

Applauding the wisdom and foresight of African Heads of State and Government in endorsing Dr Mzembi's candidature, the Ambassadors acknowledged the candidate's craft-competence, experience, eloquence and evident diplomatic skills, adding that they felt proud to be associated with his candidature and were fully confident that he would more than meet the high expectations of him as Secretary General of the UNWTO.

During exchanges with African Ambassadors, Dr Mzembi outlined his vision for the future development of global tourism under the umbrella of the UNWTO.

Key components of that vision include *inter alia* (i) the need for universal membership of the UNWTO; (ii) the need for greater inclusivity; (iii) the need to ensure growth (of global tourism) on the basis of greater equity; (iv) the need for the UNWTO to be more responsive to emerging challenges confronting the tourism industry; and (v) the need for the UNWTO to strive for greater relevance not only to its own member states but, equally, as part of the broader UN family.

Stressing that it was Africa's time to head the UNWTO, Dr Mzembi called upon candidates from other regions which have both currently and in the past fielded chief executives to UN bodies, including the mother body itself, to show magnanimity and to allow space for other regions to prove that they too can provide effective leadership at global level.



Dr Mzembi is currently Zimbabwe's Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry. He was unanimously endorsed by the 27<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Kigali, Republic of Rwanda, from 17 to 18 July, 2016.

As Africa's longest-serving Minister of Tourism, Dr Mzembi is well-known and highly respected by his African colleagues

and indeed by Tourism Ministers from across the globe.

In his home country, he is credited with having grown the tourism sector from the US\$ 200 million per annum industry he inherited in 2009, to the US\$ 1 billion plus industry of today. The recent inauguration of a new multi-million dollar flagship airport at Victoria Falls and the announcement by a number of international air carriers, including Ethiopian Airlines and Kenya Airways, that they are to begin direct long-haul flights to the new facility, will serve to further underpin Dr Mzembi's impressive legacy and facilitate even further growth in Zimbabwe's tourism economy.

Prior to taking on the Chairmanship of the UNWTO's Regional Commission for Africa (CAF) - a position which he still holds - he represented his country, Zimbabwe, on the Organisation's Executive Council.

In August 2013, together with his-then Zambian counterpart, Dr Mzembi played a pivotal role in bringing the 20<sup>th</sup> UNWTO General Assembly - the bi-ennial Ministerial-level meeting of all 157 members of the UNWTO together with representatives of the Associate and Affiliate category of membership - to the Victoria Falls, on the Zimbabwe/Zambia border. That meeting was described, by the current Secretary General of the UNWTO, Dr Taleb Rifai, as “ (...) arguably the best-attended General Assembly ever” - high praise indeed from the much respected and deeply revered outgoing Secretary General, a Jordanian national who has served two terms in the post.

Given his achievements at national, regional and international level and his clear vision of what needs to be done to take the UNWTO and, with it, global tourism, to new heights of relevance and recognition, the African Union group had no hesitation in reiterating the continent's support for Dr Mzembi's candidature and committed themselves to actively promote and work for his success during the forthcoming election - due to take place during the 105<sup>th</sup> meeting of the UNWTO Executive Council in Madrid, Spain, from 11 to 12 May, 2017.

In his closing remarks to the meeting, Ambassador Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Head of the African Union's Permanent Delegation in Geneva, congratulated Dr Mzembi on his presentation, his mastery of the tourism portfolio and the clarity of his vision for the way ahead. Wishing Dr Mzembi every success in the forthcoming election, Ambassador Ehouzou remarked that his election to the post of Secretary General of the UNWTO will constitute a great victory for Africa and for the future of both African and global tourism.



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