

Distinguished speakers, colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

On behalf of *La Universidad Europea de Canarias*, I am honored and pleased to welcome you all to the first international congress on ***Tourism in Islands in the XXI Century: dynamics and challenges*** here in La Orotava. First of all, I wish to warmly thank everyone for joining us today. My special gratitude goes to Francisco Linares, mayor of La Orotava, representing the City Council of La Orotava, for allowing us to hold the Congress in this room. Thank you, Mr. Mayor, for the tremendous support you have provided to host this two-day event.

The venue of the congress will consist of two main sites, namely *Casa Salazar* and La Universidad Europea campus. Alternatively, there are some talks scheduled to be presented here in Noble Hall as well as in *Casa de la Juventud*. I reiterate my deepest gratitude to the Town Hall.

I would also like to present my compliments to *Instituto Superior de Ciências Empresariais e do Turismo* in Portugal for the support and collaboration as we worked hand in hand in an effort to hold this first international congress in the island with strong expectations for a successful outcome. I would like to present a special thanks to Adalberto Días de Carvalho, vice-president of Iscet, for his support.

We are very fortunate to count on the presence here today of Yaiza Castillo, councilor for Tourism, Industry and Trade, as well as Sergio Moreno, Deputy Minister of Tourism, who will be giving an inaugural talk on marketing in the Canary Islands and experiences. I also welcome David Pérez González, Delegate Councilor for Tourism of the Cabildo de Tenerife, an institution with which we constantly collaborate towards achieving higher education excellence in the island. We are indeed honored to have you here with us.

What prompted *La Universidad Europea de Canarias* to host such an ambitious international congress on tourism here in the Island?

It is fair to say that the tourism sector is an essential part of not only the Canarian economy, but of the Spanish economy, at large. This initiative first came about two years ago when *La Universidad Europea de Canarias* became aware that this sector has yet to contribute both in terms of a training and research institution. Holding an international congress on tourism in the island therefore became both a necessity and an opportunity for participants from all over the world, especially those who work for the development of tourism, in education, and in research to meet, to exchange experiences, to listen, to discuss, to share information and to plan for the future.

On the mission we set out to achieve at the *Universidad Europea de Canarias*, coupled with the increasing interest in tourism here in the island, there was a clear need to develop guidelines and recommendations for promoting this sector by organizing the first international congress around three specific points, namely, research, internationalization and innovation. In this context and as I have mentioned earlier, our partnership with the Instituto Superior de Ciências Empresariais e do Turismo, in Portugal, as well as the Council of La Orotava City led to organize this congress under the theme: ***Tourism in Islands in the XXI Century: dynamics and challenges.***

Before moving forward, please allow me to elaborate a little further on the importance of these three points. To begin with, research is an important part of the work carried out by the faculty at *La Universidad Europea de Canarias*, where there is more and more an increasing involvement and dedication into the world of research observable through tourism-based scientific publications in some of the high-impact international journals. Thanks to the commitment of our faculty, tourism has developed as a discipline for which each year our partnerships as well as agreements in multidisciplinary and multicultural projects with universities overseas constantly evolve in a positive and promising way.

Another point that deserves an emphasis is our commitment to the internationalization of *La Universidad Europea de Canarias*. Our goal has always been to make this university known as an international reference in terms of both teaching and learning about Tourism. After all, this island is one of the well-known touristic destinations worldwide. This is exactly why we are committed to offering internationally oriented trainings to our students, providing an integral vision in an effort to ensure that our students can develop successfully in any working environment worldwide.

Finally, our academic approach puts innovation one of the main foci in our education system. The ultimate goal is the commitment to turn students into future professionals with high employability and great entrepreneurial ambitions so as to be able to cope with business and social changes constantly brought about by technology. It is for this purpose that a bachelor's and a master's degrees in tourism were designed and implemented at *La Universidad Europea de Canarias* with the mere aim to provide future professionals in this sector with substantial knowledge and training. As educators, we set out to take the university beyond the borders of its campus through research work carried out on current tourism and its projection towards the future.

The different talks and presentations we are set to witness throughout these two days are, as result, organized around the importance of further management of tourism in the island. As such, research, internationalization and innovation are the three benchmarks around which this congress is organized.

We have the privilege of having a very diverse scientific Committee of tourism experts from more than 20 countries and representing 26 universities around the world. During the next two days, we will have the opportunity to witness 70 selected talks which, we hope, will provide a guideline for both the regional and local governments to engage in well-thought and evidence-based management which will best contribute to the sustainable growth of the tourism sector.

We have participants from all over Spain gathered here today, very specifically from universities in Madrid, A Coruña, Vigo, León, Balearic Islands, Girona, Extremadura as well as from Canarian universities. I also welcome the colleagues from different universities in the United Arab Emirates, the Philippines, Portugal, France, Madeira, Belgium, Cape Verde, the United Kingdom, Ecuador, Turkey, Sweden, Uruguay, Hong Kong, among many others. We are honored to welcome you here today. The presence of all of you here is also an opportunity to establish new scientific and professional bridges with other geographical realities.

The congress will run in six sessions, covering the following topics:

- natural and cultural resources in the island;
- marketing of intelligent and strategic tourism;
- best practices in sustainable tourism management;
- climate change and challenges for the islands;
- entrepreneurship and innovation;
- And improving the islands' tourist image.

We will have the privilege to hear the first talk of the congress given by Sergio Moreno, the Deputy Minister of Tourism of the Government of the Canary Islands, who will lecture us on Tourism marketing in the Canary Islands and marketing experiences.

I would like to express my warmest appreciation for the participation of international representatives such as Bob Mc Kercher, editor of Tourism Management at Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). It is important to point out that the Polytechnic School of Hotel Management and Tourism-PolyU is the world's number one in ranking, according to the Global Ranking of Academic Subjects of Shanghai.

We are likewise pleased to count on the presence here with us of:

- ✓ Rene van der Duim, Vice President of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research (ATLAS), an association created in 1991 to develop

transnational educational and research initiatives in the field of tourism and leisure. ATLAS is present in 60 countries around the world.

- ✓ Giovanni Ruggieri, president of the Observatory on Tourism in the European Islands (OTIE), a non-profit association founded in Palermo in 2007 and made up of public institutions, universities, research centers and other international organizations from the seven island countries of the European Union.

The organizing committee of the congress has done a fundamental work in securing possibilities for publication in international journals. The committee also intends to publish a selective number of papers in a special book.

Before I turn the conference to the chairman of the first session, I would like to thank the Council of La Orotava City, the Government of the Canary Islands and the Cabildo de Tenerife, for sponsoring this congress through Turismo de Tenerife.

We also count on the collaboration of Canariasenruta.com, Loro Parque Foundation, European Eurhodip network, hotel Botánico, hotel Costa Atlante Tenerife de Sol Melia; the University of Vigo; the University of Extremadura and the conference management company Ex Ordo.

As mentioned earlier and although a slight decrease has been observed this century compared with the data from the previous century, it is always important to bear in mind that tourism is the economic engine of the Canary Islands with more than 16 million tourists in 2018.

Today, the world is at the crossroads with constant changes occurring worldwide, and our archipelago is not exempt from current trends in strategic planning. How we secure a sustainable growth of tourism will therefore depend heavily on the ability to redefine the course of actions under certain principles of sustainability and differentiation of natural and cultural heritage in an effort to generate high social participation.

Based on its unique characteristics (such as the costs of insularity, water, territory, image, paradise, energy), this Island is certainly the best place to debate and reflect on the opportunities and contradictions generated by tourism in island areas.

As I pointed out earlier, this congress is a unique opportunity to get to know and exchange experiences and research on tourism in the islands, a place where we can work on the tourist models of the islands from a triple perspective: environmental, economic and cultural.

To our eminent speakers, attendees and all participants thank you again and welcome. I wish you all a delightful and stimulating week.