TESTO 2

Speech by Francesco Frangialli,
Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization,
at the International Seminar on Implementing ethical principles in tourism development

(Tel Aviv, Israel, 20 September 2000)

Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to this first international seminar to be held at the invitation of the Government of Israel and the World Tourism Organization on implementing ethical principles in tourism development.

As you know, this is one of the events marking our Millennium Week in the Holy Land, a Week that is structured around the themes of tourism, peace and development and that has brought us to Tel Aviv via Amman and Bethlehem and will take us, later, to Sharm el Sheikh.

Why such an initiative, unprecedented in the life of our Organization and in the history of regional tourism? For three reasons.

First, because the year 2000 is obviously a unique moment in the history of mankind, whose repercussions are felt well beyond the Christian world and bespeak the topicality of the message of peace delivered on this Earth two thousand years ago.

Second, because a new political environment is emerging for the peoples and States of this region. A dialogue has opened up between Israel and its neighbours. In spite of the frictions and tensions that punctuate this process and will undoubtedly continue to do so, a different climate has been born. Tourism industry managers in the region, as well as in the rest of the world, are eager to contribute to its success, just as they hope to benefit once peace is secured.

Third, because the economic and tourism context of the region appears eminently favourable. The prospects for peace have encouraged tourism. With an increase of 16 per cent in international tourist arrivals, the Middle East outpaced the other regions in 1999. Arrivals in Israel grew slightly more strongly.

Our Organization wishes to develop its regional action within that environment. Not to interfere with the diplomatic talks under way, which are outside its competence, but to fulfil the fundamental mission assigned to it by its Statutes, "the promotion and development of tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace...", a mission that it solemnly recalled when adopting the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism at Santiago, Chile last year.

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is, without doubt, one of the most remarkable advances made in recent years in the thinking on world tourism.
Some people will regard, if not with derision at least with scepticism, the plan to establish at once a frame of reference and rules of the game common to all countries with a tourism vocation and all the sector’s partners. No one can however be indifferent to the facts: the new Code fulfils a genuine need and was adopted by consensus between the 107 countries that participated in our Assembly, notwithstanding their unequal development and their cultural, political and religious differences.

I should like for a moment to recall the philosophy underlying this collective accomplishment.

The Code – our Code – is the product of a determination to promote "the market economy, private enterprise and free trade" in order to allow the world tourism industry "to optimize its beneficial effects on the creation of wealth and employment". It calls for the liberalization of trade, not in just any conditions but within the context of the sustainable development of tourism.

On this basis it lays down a set of principles spelling out the reciprocal and symmetrical rights and obligations of visitors and hosts and, more broadly, of the various tourism industry partners.

But now that the principles have been laid down, the most important task remains to be fulfilled: they should be promoted and disseminated in many languages; and then, most important of all, they should be effectively implemented by means of an appropriate legal mechanism.

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism was devised to be more than just a succession of good intentions or a catalogue of pious hopes. It is a tool that may be used by the partners in the tourism industry to build together a sustainable, balanced and responsible tourism sector. It is a step forward for world tourism and, to some extent, for international law. In this field, as in many others, tourism is a pioneer.