

EUROPEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
“CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: PROMOTING
CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION”

Congratulatory address of Deputy Minister Branimir Botev

Dear Minister Lorencin,

Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to attend this forum dedicated to tourism – one of the fastest growing industries in the world and an industry, which is of structural significance for many national economies, including those of Croatia and Bulgaria.

Precisely because it is a so fast-growing industry, tourism is destined to be also a sustainable industry. In 2013, 1 078 billion inhabitants of our planet have travelled abroad as tourists. Tourism ceased long ago to be the privilege of individual groups of the elite seeking variety in their vacations and has become a natural right of every human being – the right to freedom of movement and free choice.

In this regard, the possibility provided to people from different countries to learn more about the different cultures, civilizations, traditions and customs is a significant value which motivates them to travel. At the same time, each country, each region, each town and village becomes a host promoting their cultural heritage, promoting the presence of ancient civilizations which left traces in their past. It is sufficient to mention topics like the “Roads of Roman Emperors” and the “Roads of Wine” that were examined in the Danube Strategy. They reveal both the general and the specific in the historic development and cultural heritage of the Balkan countries from the Adriatic Sea to the Black Sea.

For quite a long time Bulgaria has been aware of the strategic importance of sustainable tourism – both for the economy and for cultural cohesion – it is enshrined in our long-term Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria until 2030 approved recently by the Bulgarian Government.

Transformation of tourism into a global industry for the global world economy is also a huge challenge for the responsibility faced by the mankind in relation to lasting conservation of the environment in which the tourism industry develops.

We, the countries that have the God-given nature, location, climate, history and everything that is needed to develop tourism as sustainable strategic industry, should be also responsible for the balance that must be maintained between the development of industry and the conservation of nature. This is the view of the World Tourism Organization and UNESCO, and the efforts of the European Commission have been focused in this direction. We have to guarantee and maintain this balance and thus make the Plitvice Lakes and Dubrovnik in Croatia, the Old Nessebar, Pirin and the Balkan Mountains in Bulgaria and many other natural and cultural phenomena forever known to the people who love them and an emblem of contemporary sustainable tourism.