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I'm very happy to have been invited to join you for WTTC's inaugural regional summit. I think it is fitting that it is being held in Latin America -- a region that continues to emerge as a global force and one that has seen considerable growth, including strong first quarter 2012 tourism numbers.

We've just heard the public sector's perspective, and shortly we'll hear the private sector's view. I'm here today to paint a picture of the bridge that connects the two...and to talk about the huge opportunity that exists for the public and private sectors to work together - to secure sustained economic growth for the travel industry and the jobs that can ultimately be created.

To illustrate that point, let's use the largest family vacation destination in America ... Orlando, Florida. Orlando lost a visionary leader in Gary Sain, the CEO of Visit Orlando, just two weeks ago. My condolences go out to his family, and these remarks are dedicated to his memory.

When Disney World opened its doors in 1971, no one -- except maybe the visionary Mr. Disney himself -- could have imagined just how much it would transform Orlando's economy. Tourism and services soon squeezed out citrus to become the dominant force behind the local economy. However, there was a problem: When the theme park opened, it and the supporting tourism services demanded a labor force beyond what the current population could sustain. Since then, the population of Greater Orlando has quadrupled to more than 2 million. Disney World in Orlando has grown to become the largest single-site employer in the U.S. In 1971 the Magic Kingdom opened with 5,500 Cast Members, as their people are called, and that count has increased tenfold to over 65,000 today.

And today there's so much more than Disney in Orlando... there's Universal Studios, SeaWorld and many other attractions that have sprung up. The community now enjoys luxury malls, fancy restaurants, performing arts, professional sports, and more. Passenger traffic at the Orlando International Airport was 1.2 million in 1971 when Disney opened; today it's 35 times that. That's the power of tourism. The multiplier effects of travel and tourism are fully on display in Orlando, and the community has forever been transformed.

Speaking of impressive numbers, we've heard some extraordinary statistics at this conference... about the economic impact of travel and tourism today and our remarkable contributions to GDP, employment, exports and investments in infrastructure.

As good as these statistics are, they pale by comparison to what I believe they could be. Our impact could be even more impressive if the travel and tourism industry rallied together as a unified industry.

We frequently operate as a loose collection of disconnected vertical sectors -- the airline sector, the hotel sector, the travel agency sector, CVBs and so on - and each sector has its own agenda. Yet, the sum is greater than the whole of its parts. We risk defining ourselves too narrowly.

I would suggest that we start looking at ourselves the way our customers see our product: as a coordinated travel experience. What's the first question someone asks when you return after traveling? They ask, "How was your trip?" They don't ask, "How was your airline experience? Your hotel experience? Your car rental experience? Your booking experience?" Our customers see the collective experience, yet our industry tends to look at the singular. It is this disconnect that threatens to undermine our progress...to be at our full potential we have to have a broad perspective.

As a hotelier or a cruise line, an airline or a distributor, I know there are times when we need to give our attention to narrower issues, because they directly impact our specific sectors. But we're also an integral part of something much bigger: an industry that's among the largest job creators and economic engines on the planet.

My appeal to all of us is this: We need to find our common ground on some of the highest priority issues we face as a broad industry.

And let's start with government positions related to the growth of our industry. Are governments erecting obstacles or tearing down barriers? Have they embraced travel for the economic driver it is, or incorrectly assumed the travel sector can thrive even if subjected to public policies that stymie growth? With too few exceptions, policymakers have yet to establish travel as a *strategy* for economic growth.

By acting and speaking as one, we gain more industry traction, and our efforts translate into real progress.

There are some governments leading the way and making longer-term commitments to tourism. Others are just waking up to the power of this industry and want to help it thrive. I think we're all responsible, regardless of the sector or company we represent, to have more dialogue on the broad and most compelling issues that affect the travel industry, and to engage in more private/public conversations to effect positive change.

Let me give you just a few examples of where vision, planning and public/private sector collaboration are taking root and driving greater economic growth:

- Right here in Mexico, the country's image as a tourism hub has clearly faced challenges in recent years. As Latin America's second-largest economy, it's embroiled in a battle against well-armed drug cartels. The violence has produced 50,000 drug-related deaths since 2006, and that news has dominated

much of the international press. In response to falling tourism numbers, Mexico's Tourism Board has launched aggressive campaigns to change perceptions. For example, it recently launched a campaign to reassure U.S. citizens that Mexico is a safe destination by featuring "candid-camera" style interviews with people who had just returned from their holidays in Mexico. So far, the strategy seems to be working: 23 million U.S. tourists came here last year, breaking the previous record set in 2008.

- China is another example. China's State Council considers travel one of six strategic industries for economic growth. Tourism regulators in Beijing and Shanghai are forging an industry alliance with local businesses, venues, airlines, and neighboring provinces and cities. The United Nations World Tourism Organization predicts that 'China will surpass France and the United States as the world's No. 1 tourist destination by 2016, as it lifts travel controls and invests in roads, railways and airport infrastructure.
- And consider Japan, host of this year's WTTC Global Summit. In the months following the devastating earthquake in Eastern Japan last year, the country's government recognized our industry was one of its most important instruments of economic recovery and job creation, and firmly supported the promotion of tourism. In fact, when he addressed the WTTC in Tokyo last month, Prime Minister Noda deemed tourism "the frontier of Japan."
- Finally, consider Abu Dhabi, the site for next year's WTTC Global Summit. The government there has developed the ambitious Abu Dhabi 2030 Plan to optimize the city's development through a long-term program of urban evolution -- to ensure that the emirate is a modern, thriving place to live and work in the future. Their vision is to diversify the economy so oil isn't the only contributor to the emirate's export market, and tourism is one of the key areas of investment. In early 2009, the government set an ambitious target to attract 8 million tourists per year by 2030, up from the 1.6 million visitors it received in 2008.

To achieve this goal, Abu Dhabi is building world-class resorts, hotels, golf courses and other attractions, including high-end events like the Formula 1 Grand Prix series. It's significantly expanding its airports and local infrastructure to accommodate millions of new visitors. Such ambitious growth requires tight coordination between the public and private sectors.

Truth be told, the United States could learn from what these countries are doing to enable the travel industry to flourish. The first "green shoots" of change are becoming visible in the U.S., but in all humility, we are late to the game. However, we are making progress.

And that progress comes by having a single voice that has called for more from our government, and we've achieved some promising results in return. When we speak as one industry and use our unique assets - our proud employees, passionate customers, global brand recognition and omnipresence across America - we see progress.

Earlier this year, President Obama gave an unprecedented speech from, no surprise, Disney World, and called for a national strategy on travel and tourism.

And just last week, the Obama Administration gave a tremendous boost to our industry when it released the first-ever National Travel and Tourism Strategy for the U.S. This strategy finally and officially elevates the travel industry to what it should be: a national priority.

This strategy is a blueprint for expanding travel to and within the U.S., laying out concrete steps to be taken in five key areas. It sets a goal to increase American jobs by attracting and welcoming 100 million international visitors annually by the end of 2021 -- more than a 50 percent increase over the number expected this year. These international visitors are expected to spend \$250 billion per year, creating

jobs and spurring economic growth in communities across the country.

According to the U.S. Travel Association, for every 33 overseas visitors to the U.S., one job is created today. And one in 9 non-farm jobs directly or indirectly rely on travel and tourism. In fact, wherever travel and tourism grows, so do frontline jobs in customer service -- from rental car agents and hotel desk clerks to local food artisans and tour guides.

At my company, Sabre Holdings - where we provide innovative technology that powers the travel industry - we are also growing. As travel technology is consumed by more and more customers, we have a higher demand for technologists. In the past year, we have filled more than 1,800 highly skilled technical positions globally, in places such as Dallas, Texas; Krakow, Poland; Bangalore, India; and Montevideo, Uruguay. These are well-paying jobs for world-class technologists who have the chance to work on solving some of the most challenging problems in technology today.

To wrap up, the private and public sectors have many opportunities to partner to harness an economic power that's unmatched anywhere. We see examples around the world, but we must do more to create the climate to succeed. Businesses and governments should collaborate in smart, strategic ways to spark exactly the kind of sustainable economic growth that is so badly needed.

I am optimistic our industry is on the brink of a breakthrough. Our industry verticals - including hotels, car rental companies, train companies, theme parks, resorts, destinations, distributors, travel agents, tour operators, and of course, airlines - are starting to realize that when we define ourselves as an industry, and not simply as a collection of disparate vertical sectors, we can use our common passion for common good. When it comes right down to it, travel is good. It's good for economic growth and job creation.

And when something "not so good" happens within our industry and in our communities, such as a natural disaster that devastates a major travel destination, we should be the first to rise up, together, and come to its aid and defense. In these situations, we should be the ones helping our industry rebound by saying:

"Come back to Thailand in 2004"

"Come back to New Orleans in 2005"

"Come back to Haiti in 2010"

"Come back to Japan in 2011"

Let's show that we can help government leaders achieve *their* goals. Let's be the industry that proposes *solutions* to vexing problems, rather than one that comes with hands out. Let's *prove* the value of travel for governments, businesses and individuals. And let's begin to look at our industry through the lens of our customers.

I hope this stimulates some interesting conversation among the private sector panelists we're about to hear from ... we need to continue striving for improvement, enrichment, collaboration and growth in the travel and tourism industry. The potential is there for private/public partnerships to support our industry, which is among the largest job creators and economic engines on the planet. These kinds of partnerships can help us all grow and prosper for generations of travelers to come.