

# Gloves are off! The UNWTO Madrid Election Result: World Tourism Deserves Better

HALEIWA, HI, USA, June 13, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Breaking the silence is the new reality for the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) with the search for a new Secretary General.

The recent May 12, 2017 recommendation by the UNWTO Executive council for the new Secretary-General, was not without issues, to put it mildly. Issues related to the proposed new Secretary-General include policy violation, alleged bribery, vote purchasing and discrimination. Not very savory.

The gloves are off for the Minister of Tourism from Zimbabwe Dr. Walter Mzembi. As a candidate, he came in number 2 at the most recent Executive Council voting in Madrid on May 12.

As has been reported by eTN for several months, and was rebutted yesterday by UNWTO, Minister Mzembi echoed concerns reported by eTurboNews.

eTN is now sharing his open letter that was sent to all UNWTO members earlier today. This will be followed by his positioning papers filed and will open the floor for more discussion and no doubt more controversy, leading to the UNWTO General assembly in Chengdu, China in September.

The options for the UNWTO General Assembly in September are rather simple, yet complex.



“

I ... don't suffer any complexes nor am I intimidated by bigotry, otherwise I wouldn't have been a candidate.”

*Zimbabwe Minister of Tourism  
Hon. Dr. Walter Mzembi*

The rules and procedures do not clearly say what will happen if the suggested candidate was not confirmed. This situation has the potential to plunge the UNWTO into an indeterminate future or keep a Secretariat past its sale by date at the helm clearly the opposite of what Membership prefers judging by the number of external candidates who offered themselves as Candidates.

eTN will continue reporting on this important story and invites thoughts, feedback, comments or observations. email:

[publisher@etn.travel](mailto:publisher@etn.travel) On or off the record.

Transcript of The open letter by Dr. Mzembi:

Excellencies, Ministers of Tourism, Heads of Delegations and UNWTO Secretariat

## BREAKING THE SILENCE: SAVING THE UNWTO FOR THE GOOD OF GLOBAL TOURISM:

I write proudly as a global citizen who did not choose where to be born nor had a choice of race or colour, but one who understood that we are all created in God's image and are therefore equal before his Authority. I therefore don't suffer any complexes nor am I intimidated by bigotry, otherwise I wouldn't have been a candidate in these most recent elections for the next Secretary General for our sector (2018-21).

However, I am perturbed by Dr Rifai's comments on the criteria for choosing the new Secretary General that he shared with the world at the closing Press Conference on the 12th of May 2017 at the Melia Castilla in Madrid:

1. the character, vision and knowledge of a candidate, and
2. the country this candidate represents and its standing in the world.

I need to state upfront that both criteria never came under consideration at any point during the Executive Council's deliberations and it would be interesting to know who scores other countries' standing and what criteria they use. This aspect was also not a requirement when the position was advertised. Country reputation is not a criterion for Membership to the UNWTO, therefore, the matter relating to the candidate and the standing of the country he represents should not arise and cannot be fed or entertained at the level of a Secretary General whom we all look up to for magnanimity and protection.

I stood out in contrast to other Candidates only because I ran a sustained, concerted, thoughtful, visionary and dignified Campaign, initially dismissed by sceptical elements including from my own country, but later taken very seriously by watchers after my endorsement by the African Union and an aggressive global outreach of my candidature and what it stood for. I was courageously for "change" - probably intimidating - and I wish stakeholders

could study carefully my policy offerings, which together with those of other Candidates were ignored and never discussed by the "restricted and private meeting" of the Executive Council as required by the rules of procedure on electing a Secretary General. I picked some very good policy nuggets from other Candidates which I think need to be carried through and should have been discussed and noted. Mr Jaime Alberto Cabal Sanclemente from Colombia impressed me, so did Ambassador Dho and Carlos Vogeler.

If we take a closer look, this procedure at Executive Council breaks the record as the first job search or call where responses and candidates profiles were not scrutinised by an interviewing panel who instead carried out a vote without any due diligence on the Candidates! This only happens in a world of predetermined outcomes where public adverts and the inclusion of other Candidates is meant only to give a semblance of credibility and legitimacy to the outcome and process. To his credit Dr Rifai encouraged all of us into the race for the world's top job in global tourism, however, criteria, shortlisting, elimination and assessment procedures must bring the best candidate to the position and he should remain non – conflicted until ratification by the GA.

Member States have made me aware of misinformation currently being spread by the Secretariat regarding my standing post 12 May 2017 and I wish to set the record straight as follows:

1. The General Assembly is convening to ratify the Executive Council recommendation of Mr Zurab

Pololikashvili of Georgia as the SG elect. He emerged as the winner with the highest ballots 18, beating the run off candidature of Dr Walter Mzembe who polled 15 votes.

2. The ratification is by way of a Yes or No vote to the single recommendation of Mr Zurab Pololikashvili and it is not by acclamation.

3. Upon the request of one Country, and one Country only, a secret ballot voting can take place over the ratification of the above-mentioned recommended candidate. No other names are envisaged in such a process, beyond the EC nominee.

4. Mr Zurab Pololikashvili needs 2/3 of the voting members of GA in order to be confirmed and officially nominated as Secretary General. The rules of procedure are silent to what happens in case Mr Zurab Pololikashvili fails to secure or garner 2/3 majority by vote of the sitting members of the General Assembly.

5. An agenda item on the "Conduct of the Executive Council Elections" and "Contingencies" in the event of Mr Zurab Pololikashvili failing to secure the endorsement of the General Assembly is imperative. Rule 5 on the Rules of the General Assembly clears that any Member can propose an agenda item. This should come before the now circulated agenda item no 9. If Members are dissatisfied with the "conduct or processes", they can propose to nullify the result and this requires a simple majority - Rule 38 (1) - of sitting members to pass it, in which case agenda item 9 would be dispensed with. This proposal can be raised by any Member State.

6. The options available to Member States will be the subject of discussion of the General Assembly under the above item. The EC proposes one nominee only and I am prompted to clarify this after discovering that Member States are being misled and manipulated by the Secretariat in its oral engagements, suggesting that "failure to vote in Mr Zurab Pololikashvili will automatically hand over the UNWTO to Dr Walter Mzembe, subsequently going against the wishes of the United Nations which does not approve of Zimbabwe taking over the Agency". Apart from being mischievous and misleading, and of course a blatant lie on the standing of the UN on the matter, this approach exposes a serious conflict of interest and abuse of incumbency.

7. I ran as a Candidate for Secretary General post encouraged by Dr. Rifai and I know for sure that this applies to the other Candidates who also feel much betrayed by an opaque process that brought a "stranger in the house". Nothing personal against Mr Zurab Pololikashvili, the sector hardly knows him nor his attributes except Mr Rifai who has "known him for a very long time", although he officially presented his credentials to the UNWTO in August 2016. The better qualified Candidates eliminated each other in a typical Machiavellian style, leaving an unenviable outcome to prevail.

Finally, am sure that by the time you are reading this, you are already saturated with innuendos and falsehoods around my candidature 'underestimated' as quipped to me by Dr Rifai, but my only crime being a near upset of a predetermined outcome to push the Georgian candidate into office. However, it's no longer the responsible thing to keep the silence.

To this day, I remain "enemy number one" of this designed outcome!

But this is not anymore about one person. It's about the sake and future of global tourism and the reputation and legacy of our beloved Secretary General. Ms Anita Mendirata's email (who works in Dr Rifai's office) of 13th of May 2017 circulated to a select few is instructive and she implores her circulation list to "Please share this request with others you know he is close to who may be able to channel love & strength his way". I attach the email for your deeper understanding and coincidence of thoughts with what I am sharing.

Overall, I strongly believe that UNWTO is doomed, if we fail to:

1. Observe the very Ethics, whose Convention framework is "Provisional Agenda no 4" of our GA. God forbid the hypocrisy.
2. Promote merit, knowledge, experience and competence as the virtues of a future SG and other recruitments. We are all in deep agreement that, in a civilised world, bigotry has no place, especially in our sector, which on the other hand needs to be inclusive and peaceful.
3. Facilitate a robust and frank discussion on "the UNWTO we want" and discuss openly the shortlisted candidates and what went amiss with the Executive Council process that emerged with Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili from Georgia as the Candidate nominated to be ratified by the General Assembly in Chengdu, China in September 2017.

I propose this discussion as a separate agenda item before "ratification". Any Member State can propose this 30 days before the GA. Step 2 of the 5th of May aide memoire was skipped deliberately by the Executive Council and the "Why?" should be reviewed by the General Assembly. Candidates were not discussed nor assessed by the EC! So what was the voting truly based on?

4. Correctly interpret the rules of procedure and do not allow perversions and manipulation of facts and characters whenever the Secretariat convenes meetings or has private audiences with Member States, who are made to believe that they are receiving "privileged information" from an SG we should all trust.
5. Stop the blatant conflict of interest by the Secretariat which is handholding Mr Zurab Pololikashvili into UNWTO statutory business before confirmation by the General Assembly. This is not the handover period to takeover, nor the transition period: handover technically starts after 16th September, subject to confirmation.

The choice is ours. Whether to live with this mistake and error of judgment or to correct it during the upcoming GA for the good of global tourism.

It takes courage, integrity, and transparency to bring our respected Secretary General to order and do the right thing for once: reasserting our voice and authority as shareholders to determine the UNWTO leadership we want without fear, undue influence and manipulation of facts and procedures.

We should turn up in our absolute numbers at the forthcoming General Assembly and arrive prepared and conversant with the Rules of Procedure of our General Assembly and UNWTO Statutes. All our diplomatic offices are very capable of explaining to us what we don't understand without any external interpretation, even if proposed by the organization itself.

See you in Chengdu!

Hon Dr. Walter Mzembe (PhD), (Pr. Eng), FZwIE, MEIZ  
Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry  
Republic of Zimbabwe  
UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa Chairperson

Read the article, "Why the UNWTO Secretary Election was flawed? Tourism Minister files position paper" here: <http://www.eturbonews.com/157165/flawed-unwto-election-process-transcript-position-papers-submitted-tourism-minister>

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