

# SCANDALS AND FRAUD ON THE TOP OF THE WORLD TOURISM ORGANISATION



The last two Secretaries General of the World Tourism Organization, UNWTO, officially and publicly denounced the unacceptable excesses surrounding the election of the next Secretary General for the period 2022-2025.

As world media already informed of the low maneuvers orchestrated by the current UNWTO Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili of Georgia, to ensure his re-election as the head of the organization by trying to eliminate all potential competition. **These tricks had partially failed because Bahrain had succeeded to present a real candidacy, while other likely candidates had not been able to do the same.**

This time, the scandal has become official and global, because the last two personalities to have held this position for the last 20 years, Francesco Frangialli (from 1998 to 2010) and Dr. Taleb Rifai (from 2010 to 2017) could not stand these conspiracies any longer and have just published a vitriolic letter denouncing this attempted coup.

This letter opened publicly was sent to the 159 Ministers of Tourism of the whole world who are to elect the next Secretary General with also as addressee the Secretary General of the United Nations on which the UNWTO depends. This is a great premiere for the UN, which will no longer be able to hide its face.

In diplomatic terms, the two former Secretaries General of the World Tourism Organization indicate that they are particularly concerned about this problem and that they want to maintain the sincerity and integrity of the electoral process for the election of the UNWTO Secretary General. Therefore, they strongly suggest that the deadline for the submission of candidatures be extended to its normal date at the end of March 2021.

It should be recalled that this date had been abruptly brought forward by almost 5 months (to 17 November 2020), a decision announced on 15 September 2020 even though the final vote will only take place at the end of 2021! This return to the traditional dates of the electoral process would allow all other potential candidates to submit their candidacies.

This letter should get UN moving, but time is running out. For Zurab Pololikashvili sets the clock ticking and hopes to keep the meeting of the UNWTO Executive Committee on 18 January. This committee, which brings together only 20% of the members, has the exorbitant power to select the only candidate to be put to the vote at the General Assembly in October 2021.

In the meantime, Zurab Pololikashvili continues to promote his candidacy towards the only countries that are part of this Executive Board by organizing, despite the health situation, official trips to these countries alone, promising them substantial advantages for the years to come in exchange for their precious votes during the selection of the candidate. According to some well-informed sources, Brazil and Chile have been offered important positions within the organization, and Saudi Arabia will obtain the opening of an UNWTO antenna that would oversee nearly 13 countries in the region...

And for Zurab Pololikashvili, it is also important that the candidate (in this case him) be chosen at the beginning of 2021, because this choice would be made before the official publication of the UNWTO's accounts is effective. Normally, this publication of the financial accounts takes place around May, and always before the meeting of the Executive Council, which can thus control them.

**It is customary that if the General Secretary is a candidate for re-election, all travel to promote his candidacy must be at his expense and financed personally.** This surely poses a small problem for Zurab Pololikashvili who has organized this year, and without counting the cost, official visits at the expense of UNWTO to all those countries whose votes are vital for him. His predecessor, Dr. Taleb Rifai, had already taken offence at this and had not hesitated to remind the public of this rule, without Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili seeming to want to take it into account.

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