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**Speech for Jens Zimmer Christensen
20 February 2019 – European Parliament**

Dear MEP De Monte,
Dear Members of the European Parliament,
Dear Mr. Peltomaki,
Dear Mr. Corazza,
Distinguished guests and colleagues,

Let me first of behalf of HOTREC thank you for participating in this event today.

2019 is an important moment in time for the European Union, not only because of Brexit, but also due to the rather un-predictable results of this years upcoming European elections, which will give us a new European Parliament and Commission.

In these challenging times, it is HOTREC's duty and role to communicate clearly the industry's vision for the future and the key priorities of the sector.

As the European trade association of hotels, restaurants, bars and cafés in Europe, which brings together 42 national associations in 30 countries, **HOTREC's vision is to place hospitality at the heart of sustainable tourism development in Europe by fostering the industry's jobs, growth and innovation and by unlocking its potential.**

With 2 million enterprises mainly family run and micro businesses and 11,9 million workers, the hospitality industry represents 80% of the total employment in EU tourism. A driving force is its capacity to create new jobs: 1,6 million between 2013 and 2016.

Over the past 5 years, HOTREC's continued partnership with the EU institutions achieved 5 crucial European regulatory developments:

- the policy action on the collaborative economy;
- the regulation on platform-to-business relations;
- the reform of the VAT system and its optional reduced rates for our sector;
- the modernization of consumer law in light of digitalization; AND
- the adjustment of the new data protection requirements to a workable level for SMEs.

On behalf of our Members, of HOTREC past President Susanne Kraus-Winkler and our CEO Christian de Barrin, I would like to thank you for our excellent cooperation and many achievements over the past 5 years to boost competitiveness and the European economy.

To ensure a bright future, the hospitality sector has identified 5 key priorities:

The 1st priority is to sustain EU actions on the collaborative economy. We look forward to the swift implementation of the (Air)bnb commitments, whose distinction between traders and peers will help achieve a level playing field when it comes to professional activities.

Number 2, EU institutions should implement better regulation with new thinking on subsidiarity. EU actions should primarily focus on large cross-border issues. Derogations should be granted, when negative impacts on local businesses are identified, while the sectoral impacts of horizontal legislation should be better taken into account, and voluntary initiatives facilitated.

As a 3rd priority, the EU should revise its regulatory framework to recognize online platform's liability in relation to the role they play on digital markets, businesses and consumers. The E-commerce Directive dates from 2000 and existing legislation is outdated.

Our 4rd priority is linked to the core business of any restaurant, namely food. The industry has always been a responsible partner, when food safety is at stake, as with the recent legislation on acrylamide, which HOTREC supported. When it comes to diet and nutrition, the industry will continue to promote healthy lifestyles on a voluntary basis and in close cooperation with the EU Institutions as a workable and attractive alternative to horizontal EU legislation.

As a 5th and last priority, we call upon the EU Institutions to make the fight against skills shortage a truly European case. Hospitality is a driving force in job creation, as demonstrated by the 1,6 million new jobs created between 2013 and 2016. However, the hospitality sector lacks EU funding and tools to train the workforce, which will need to be addressed. Further work is also needed to improve the image of tourism, and only a strong policy agenda will help the sector to innovate, attract, train and retain workers. Last but not least, innovation shall be at the core of sustainable tourism development, including research on block chains, artificial intelligence and on big data.

On a closing note.

Well managed tourism is a creator of jobs, it brings prosperity, understanding , stability and peace.

We look forward to our continued partnership in making a better and sustainable Europe.

Thank you for your attention!