

**The Tenth Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers
Singapore, 29 January 2007**

Joint Media Statement

"ASEAN Forges Ahead Towards Greater Tourism Integration"

1. The Tenth Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers (10th M-ATM) was held on 29 January 2007 in Singapore in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2007 (ATF 2007). H.E. Mr. S. Iswaran, Minister of State for Trade and Industry, Singapore chaired the Meeting together with the co-chair H.E. Dr. Suwit Yodmani, Minister of Tourism and Sports, Thailand.
2. Preliminary figures show that ASEAN attracted more than 56 million visitors last year, posting a healthy 8 per cent growth over 2005 with countries like Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand posting double-digit growth. Intra-ASEAN travel accounted for 49% of total visitor arrivals. The Ministers were pleased to note the positive trend in visitor arrivals into ASEAN over the last three years, underscoring ASEAN's growing attractiveness as a region.
3. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the overall vision of ASEAN Tourism Integration, and emphasised the need to hasten the progress of the Roadmap for Tourism Integration so as to strengthen ASEAN's appeal as a single destination. The Ministers called for more coordination with all stakeholders in both public and private sectors to accelerate tourism development. They acknowledged the progress achieved in the following areas: branding and joint promotion of ASEAN, connectivity within ASEAN, cooperation in crisis communications, ASEAN youth exchange and capability development and quality assurance

Branding and Joint Promotions

4. The Ministers were satisfied with the progress of ASEAN Joint Tourism Promotion through re-activation of the ASEAN Tourism Promotional Chapter (APCT) involving all ASEAN tourism representatives, embassies and consulates in Sydney, Beijing and Seoul. The Ministers tasked the Senior Officials to continue and expand the exercise involving various tourism events and activities, including the involvement of the private sector through the ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA) in the branding and promotional efforts of the ASEAN region, and the production of common ASEAN advertising for in-flight magazines and promotional video material for dissemination to airlines.
5. The Ministers also welcomed the decision of the NTOs to support the promotion of the Visit ASEAN Pass (vap!) that had been developed by ASEANTA, as well as ASEANTA's efforts in developing the vap! Portal (www.visitASEAN.travel).

Connectivity

6. As achieving the ASEAN Open Skies Vision will provide a tremendous boost to travel into and within ASEAN, the ASEAN Tourism Ministers urged ASEAN Transport Ministers to work towards the implementation of the Air Services Liberalisation Roadmap by 2010. The ASEAN NTOs will also work together with Senior Transport Officials Meeting (STOM) to accelerate the Integration of Tourism Services and Air Travel in ASEAN as well as other relevant tourism-transport issues, commencing with the meeting on 6 February 2007 in Bangkok
7. As ASEAN NTOs work towards facilitating travel within the region, through the signing of the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Visa Exemption in Kuala Lumpur on 25 July 2006, the Ministers raised the urgent need to facilitate the travel of non-ASEAN nationals within the region. They encouraged immigration authorities to study the feasibility of easing intra-ASEAN cross-border travel and developing visa facilitation for non-ASEAN travellers travelling within ASEAN. The Ministers cited that Thailand and Cambodia are already working towards a single visa for non-ASEAN nationals, signalling a step forward in this initiative.
8. The Ministers welcomed the re-activation of the Cruise Working Group to strengthen collaboration among ASEAN countries so as to improve the sea connectivity and enhance cruise tourism in ASEAN. The Ministers were pleased with the progress of the Cruise ASEAN website which provides detailed cruise port and destination information of member countries.
9. The Ministers noted the completion of the ASEAN Tourism Investment Study which recommends the establishment of ASEAN Tourism Investment Zones to promote the region as a single tourism investment destination. The Ministers also acknowledged the efforts of the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EGA) and Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) in strengthening regional connectivity.
10. The Ministers welcomed the concrete steps taken by China and Republic of Korea towards the establishment of the ASEAN-China Centre and ASEAN-ROK Centre respectively, for trade, investment and tourism promotion. The Ministers thanked the ASEAN-Japan Centre for its support in promoting ASEAN tourism which includes production and dissemination of promotional videos, and youth exchanges. They welcomed the initiative of the Government of Japan to increase youth exchanges among countries participating in East Asia Summit.
11. The Ministers noted the consultations between Senior Officials of ASEAN and those from India and Russia to strengthen tourism cooperation. Discussion will continue on projects agreed upon by ASEAN and India and Russia. These include the liberalisation of air services and the promotion of pilgrimage tourism between ASEAN and India, as well as Russian language training for tour guides and familiarisation tours by travel agents between ASEAN and Russia. The Ministers looked forward to Ministerial Consultations between ASEAN and India and Russia to give further impetus to these initiatives.

Cooperation in Crisis Communications

12. The ASEAN NTOs noted the need to coordinate efforts to effectively manage communications on issues that may impact tourism in the region, so as to ensure accurate and timely information in times of crises. The Ministers noted the progress made by the ASEAN Crisis Communications Team (ACCT) on the completion of the ASEAN Crisis Communication Manual (ACCM) that provides a common framework for NTOs in managing communications of issues or crises affecting individual ASEAN member countries or the region as a whole. The Ministers welcomed the move by ACCT to continue training its members to better equip them in this area.

ASEAN Youth Exchange

13. Recognising the tourism, educational and cultural benefits of youth travel, the Ministers strongly endorsed the recommendation of the NTOs to focus on the youth segment in its branding and promotional efforts for the next three years.
14. The Ministers welcomed the upcoming meeting of the ASEAN Youth Ministers in Singapore in April 2007 and sought their strong support for the promotion of ASEAN youth travel and exchange in conjunction with various youth organisations across ASEAN.
15. The Ministers were also encouraged by ASEANTA's commitment towards promoting intra-ASEAN youth travel, as evident from the focus on the youth segment at the ASEAN Tourism Conference at ATF 2007.

Capability Development and Quality Assurance

16. The Ministers noted the progress in the drafting of Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) for Tourism Professionals which would eventually facilitate movement of tourism professionals within the region and enhance the quality of tourism human resources, and directed Senior Officials to finalize the key elements of the MRA for signing at ATF 2008 in Thailand.
17. The Ministers noted the completion of the Guidelines of Certification of ASEAN Tourism Standards and its logo, and encouraged full support from ASEANTA and the ASEAN Hotel and Restaurants Association (AHRA). The Minister also noted the progress of benchmarking national tourism standards with major criteria and requirements of ASEAN tourism standards particularly on the green hotel and local food and beverages services. The Ministers stressed the need for further cooperation among ASEAN Member Countries to enhance capacity building and human resources development in tourism.

Future ATFs

18. ATF 2007 was held in Singapore from 26 January to 3 February 2007. The next ATF will be held in Bangkok from 18 to 26 January 2008 under the theme "Synergy of ASEAN Towards Dynamic Unity in Diversity", and ATF 2009 will be held in Viet Nam.

LIST OF MINISTERS

The Meeting was attended by:

1. H.E. Pehin Dato Dr. Awg Haji Ahmad Haji Jumat, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam;
2. H.E. Mr. Lay Prohas, Minister of Tourism, Cambodia;
3. H.E. Mr. Jero Wacik, Minister of Culture and Tourism, Indonesia;
4. H.E. Mr. Somphong Mongkhonvilay, Minister, Chairman of Lao National Tourism Administration, Lao PDR;
5. H.E. Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor, Minister of Tourism, Malaysia;
6. H.E. Major General Soe Naing, Minister for Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar;
7. H.E. Mr. Oscar P. Palabyab, Undersecretary, Department of Tourism, Philippines;
8. H.E. Mr. S. Iswaran, Minister of State for Trade and Industry, Singapore;
9. H.E. Dr. Suvit Yodmani, Minister of Tourism and Sports, Thailand;
10. H.E. Mr Hoang Tuan Anh, Chairman of Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism, Viet Nam; and
11. H.E. Mr. Ong Keng Yong, Secretary-General of ASEAN.