



THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS

25 January 2015, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The Eighteenth Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers was held on 25 January 2015 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2015 (ATF). H.E. Mr. Htay Aung, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism of Myanmar, chaired the Meeting and H.E. Mr. Ramon R. Jimenez, Jr., Secretary of Tourism of Philippines was the Vice-Chairman. The 18th M-ATM Meeting was preceded by the Forty-First Meeting of ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and their consultations with dialogue partners.

2. The Ministers welcomed the large influx of tourists in 2014 where preliminary figure showed that 97.2 million of international tourists visited ASEAN Member States, posting a growth of 3 per cent from 2013. The Ministers were also pleased that the operationalisation of ASEAN Open Skies Agreements help to maintain intra-ASEAN travel as the main source of tourism growth in the region, with record arrivals of 28.05 million, or 53 per cent share of total international tourists visited ASEAN.

3. The Ministers commended the progress made in implementing the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2011-2015 and tasked senior officials to expedite the implementation of remaining measures to support the timely realisation of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015.

4. The Ministers agreed that for the new ATSP 2016-2025, ASEAN should strive to become a quality tourism destination offering a unique and diverse ASEAN experience while committed to responsible, sustainable, inclusive and balance tourism development.

Human Resources in Tourism and Mobility

5. The Ministers endorsed the final text of the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Secretariat for the Implementation of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals in Jakarta, Indonesia to facilitate the implementation of the MRA on Tourism Professionals. Amongst others, this will include supporting the certification of 6,000 ASEAN tourism professionals based on the ASEAN Common Competency Standard for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP). The Ministers looked forward to the signing of the Agreement during the 26th ASEAN Summit in April 2015 in Malaysia.

6. The Ministers applauded the successful conclusion of the Master Trainers (MTs) and Master Assessors (MAs) trainings for Food Production, Front Office, and Food and Beverage (F&B) Services Divisions held in Bangkok, Bali and Manila last September,

October and December 2014, respectively. The Ministers noted that the region is now supported by 83 MTs and 89 MAs for Housekeeping, Food Production, F&B Services and Front Office Divisions who will now help to conduct training of national trainers and assessors in each ASEAN Member State.

7. The Ministers noted the development of the ASEAN Tourism Professionals Registration System (ATPRS) which will facilitate the registration of tourism professionals and MRA related stakeholders, and matchmaking mechanism between tourism professionals and their potential employers. The Ministers welcomed new projects and activities to be undertaken in 2015, including Toolbox Development for Travel Agencies and Tour Operations, Training and Pilot Projects for national trainers and assessors in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam. The Ministers also expressed their appreciation to the Government of Australia for their continue support on the establishment of requisite MRA infrastructures through the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme II.

Enhancing the quality

8. The Ministers agreed that it is important for ASEAN to enhance its competitiveness as a single tourist destination through the development and adoption of tourism standards. The Ministers were pleased with the adoption of ASEAN tourism standards and their certification process for green hotel, homestay, spa services, public toilet, clean tourist city and community-based tourism standards, and tasked senior officials to ensure relevant establishments adhere to adopted standards. The Ministers appreciated the new initiative on the development of ASEAN's MICE Venue Standard.

9. The Ministers launched the ASEAN Tourism Security & Safety Guidelines and Online Resource Centre Website (www.aseantssrc.org), which contained guidelines, best practice and background papers on tourism related security and safety practices in ASEAN Member States. The Ministers also adopted the Tourism and Climate Change Monitoring System and Work Plan, which will be included in the development of the new ATSP 2016-2025.

Promoting ASEAN Tourism

10. The Ministers acknowledged the good progress made in promoting and marketing ASEAN tourism through website, social media marketing, public relations and partnerships with private sector and ASEAN centres. This includes the continued enhancement of ASEAN Tourism website (www.aseantourism.travel), ASEAN Member States' NTO websites, Sina Weibo (www.dongnanya.travel) website, Travel Channel for Pacific Asia Travel Association's Love Campaign and "ASEAN for ASEAN" activities during 2015-2016.

11. The Ministers welcomed and supported Malaysia's initiative to develop an ASEAN-focused TV travel channel – "GOASEAN", to promote ASEAN as a single tourism destination featuring key areas such as nature-based tourism, culture and heritage tourism, family fun and business tourism. To complement the travel channel, the Ministers also supported the proposal to develop ASEAN Tourism Packages.

12. The Ministers noted the Report on Senior and Long Stay Market Tourism Strategy and welcomed its recommendations to integrate its marketing and communication through existing digital marketing, PR and publicity, and piggybacking NTOs activities.

13. The Ministers were pleased with the outcomes of the activities undertaken by the ASEAN Promotional Chapters for Tourism (APCTs) in Sydney and Mumbai in 2014 to promote ASEAN tourism through participation in the travel industry exhibitions, food festivals and networking events. The Ministers also thanked the ASEAN-China Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre and ASEAN-Korea Centre for their relentless support to promote ASEAN tourism to the Chinese, Japanese and Korean markets through production of advertorial and familiarisation tour by Chinese media, participation in travel marts in Japan, and ASEAN Culture and Tourism Fair in Korea, respectively.

14. The Ministers noted the progress of updating the ASEAN Crisis Communication Manual (ACCM), which will serve as an effective tool to uphold the credibility of the organizations and/or destinations through the provision of accurate and timely information to key stakeholders. The Ministers tasked the officials to finalize the updated ACCM for adoption at the next ATF.

Developing ASEAN Tourism Product

15. The Ministers noted the progress in developing nature-based tourism products, including the development of the ASEAN Ecotourism Strategic Plan, and tasked the senior officials to align it with the new ATSP 2016-2025. The Ministers also noted the recommendations arising from the study entitled “ASEAN Culture & Heritage Tourism Product Development in ASEAN Member States” and tasked the officials to undertake consultations with the private sector, and conduct familiarisation trip for both tour operators and travel writers. The Ministers also expressed their appreciation to Indonesia for the production of a coffee-table book on ASEAN traditional cuisines entitled “Lemon Grass, a Taste of ASEAN”.

16. The Ministers welcomed the efforts to develop river-based tourism products, including the recent conclusion of the 3rd Experts Group Meeting on ASEAN-Japan Cruise Promotion Strategy held on 27-28 February 2014 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and technical assistance from UNWTO on River-Based Tourism Development. ASEAN also spearheaded the creation of a monthly online cruise e-newsletter titled “ASEAN Cruise News” that provides key market insights and information on cruise products to strengthen trade capabilities across the ASEAN region.

17. The Ministers acclaimed the successful outcomes of the ASEAN Tourism Investment Forum 2014 held on 18 September 2014 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia to promote ASEAN as an integrated investment region based on the collective strengths of ASEAN Member States. The Forum was attended by 178 participants from governments, tourism investment organisations, private sectors, and other tourism related stakeholders.

Enhancing Connectivity

18. The Ministers commended the enhancement of ASEAN air connectivity through the implementation of the ASEAN Open Skies Agreements and the engagement with Dialogue

Partners in air services negotiations, including China, European Union, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The Ministers also welcomed the recent conclusion of the Protocol 2 on the Exchange of 5th Freedom Air Traffic Rights between ASEAN Member States and China under the ASEAN-China Air Transport Agreement, which will further enhance business and leisure travel within and into the region. The Ministers also noted the outcome from other relevant sectors, which support people-to-people connectivity such as transportation and immigration.

ASEAN Tourism Forum

19. The Ministers noted that the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2015 held on 22-29 January 2015 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, with the theme of “ASEAN-Tourism Towards Peace, Prosperity and Partnership” would be attended by 300 buyers and 905 sellers with 527 booths as well as 67 international and 57 local media. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to CNN International as the Official International Cable and Satellite Media Partner of ATF 2015.

20. The Ministers noted that the ATF 2016 will be convened on 18-25 January 2016 in Manila, the Philippines, with the theme of “ASEAN: One Community for Sustainability”. The Ministers also noted that Singapore agreed to host ATF in 2017.

21. The Ministers expressed their sincere appreciation to the Government and People of Myanmar for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for the Meetings.

LIST OF MINISTERS

The Meeting was attended by:

- (i) H.E. Pehin Dato Yahya, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam;
- (ii) H.E. Dr. Thong Khon, Minister of Tourism, Cambodia;
- (iii) H.E. Dr. Arief Yahya, Minister of Tourism, Indonesia;
- (iv) H.E. Mr. Chaleune Warintrasak, Vice Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR;
- (v) H.E. Datuk Dr. Ong Hong Peng, Secretary General, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia, representing H.E. Dato’ Seri Mohamed Nazri bin Abdul Aziz, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia;
- (vi) H.E. Mr. Htay Aung, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar;
- (vii) H.E. Mr. Ramon R. Jimenez, Jr. Secretary of Tourism, Philippines;
- (viii) Mr. Lionel Yeo, Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board, representing H.E. Mr. S. Iswaran, Second Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore;

- (ix) H.E. Ms. Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul, Minister for Tourism and Sports, Thailand;
- (x) H.E. Mr. Ho Anh Tuan, Vice Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Viet Nam;
and
- (xi) H.E. Mr. Lim Hong Hin, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Economic Community.
