



THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS 19 January 2014, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The Seventeenth Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers (17th M-ATM) was held on 19 January 2014 in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2014 (ATF 2014). The Meeting was preceded by the Thirty-Ninth Meeting of ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and their consultations with dialogue partners. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri bin Abdul Aziz, Minister of Tourism and Culture of Malaysia, and H.E. Mr. Htay Aung, Union Minister of Hotels and Tourism of Myanmar served as Vice Chair.
2. Based on preliminary tourism statistics provided by ASEAN Member States, the Ministers were pleased to note that the ASEAN remain attractive destination for both regional and international tourists with growth of 14.51% and 9.9% over 2012. The Ministers also noted that the total number of tourists visiting ASEAN in 2013 is 90.2 million, an increase of 12% from 2012.
3. The Ministers welcomed the good progress in implementing the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2011-2015, where 75% measures for 2013 have been duly completed. The Ministers agreed to revise some of the measures in ASTP to ensure its relevance to the on-going efforts to promote sustainable tourism to support the timely realization of ASEAN Economic Community by 2015.

Facilitation of Tourism Professionals Mobility

4. The Ministers commended the progress made in facilitating free flow of services and skilled labor within ASEAN through the implementation of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals. The Ministers noted the completion of 144 toolboxes for hotel divisions (e.g., front office, food and beverage services, food production and housekeeping), and the ASEAN Tourism Qualifications Equivalent Matrix, which will serve as key references for tourism industry and training institutions in delivering the programme under the MRA on Tourism Professionals.
5. The Ministers welcomed the new projects and activities that will be undertaken in 2014, amongst others, Toolbox Development for Travel Agencies and Tour Operations, Training of ASEAN Master Trainers and Master Assessor for Front Office, Food and Beverage Services and Food Production Divisions, and Development of ASEAN Tourism Professional Registration System.
6. The Ministers agreed to begin the pilot projects for housekeeping division under the MRA this year given the readiness of the supporting infrastructure for such an undertaking. The Ministers also called for initiatives to promote greater awareness to attract more participation from various tourism stakeholders in respective ASEAN Member States.

7. The Ministers adopted the terms of reference (TOR) for the establishment of a Regional Secretariat to facilitate the implementation of the MRA for Tourism Professionals in Indonesia in 2015. In this regard, the Ministers acknowledged the contribution of the Government of Australia for its continued support to ASEAN in establishing necessary MRA infrastructures through the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme (AADCP).

Developing Quality Tourism

8. The Ministers commended the progress made in developing comprehensive tourism standards for green hotel, homestay, spa services, public toilet, clean tourist city and community based tourism, and their certification process which will help to enhance the quality of human resources, services and facilities in the region. The Ministers tasked their officials to initiate capacity building for auditors and pilot testing for the above standards to facilitate their full implementation by 2015.

9. The Ministers welcomed the successful outcomes of the “ASEAN Climate Change and Tourism Measures and Parameters Development Workshop” held on 7-10 April 2013 in Davao City, the Philippines resulting in the completion of the Framework, Approaches, Parameters and Measures for Climate Change and Tourism in ASEAN.

10. The Ministers expressed their sympathy to the Philippines in the aftermath of the earthquake and Typhoon Haiyan that hit the country in the last quarter of 2013 and acknowledged the work undertaken by the Philippines Government to bring back normalcy and commence with the rehabilitation process. Towards this end, the Ministers endorsed the implementation of the ASEAN Tourism Framework on responding to climate change to ensure the sustainable development of tourism in the region in the near future.

11. The Ministers adopted the ASEAN Joint Declaration on the Implementation of Code of Ethics for Tourism in recognition of the important roles and contributions tourism sector made to economic and social development in the region, especially in improving the quality of the lives of the people.

Promoting ASEAN Tourism

12. The Ministers welcomed the progress made with ASEAN partners in jointly promoting and marketing ASEAN tourism activities, amongst others, the social media marketing of ASEAN tourism on Sinaweibo website (www.dongnanya.travel), themed promotion of experiential and creative travel to tap the Chinese market. The Ministers also expressed their appreciation to Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and Travel Channel for PATA Love Campaign, which will promote ASEAN tourism destinations and tourism products through ASEAN Member States’ best destination footages to be aired on the Travel Channel. The Ministers also noted that the ASEAN Tourism website (www.aseantourism.travel) has been continuously enhanced through the uploading of articles, images, news, event calendar and materials to promote existing multi-country packages.

13. The Ministers were pleased with the outcomes of the activities undertaken by the ASEAN Promotional Chapters for Tourism (APCT) in both Sydney and Mumbai in 2013 to promote ASEAN tourism through major tourism consumer shows, networking functions and print campaigns. The Ministers also welcomed the result of the studies on “*ASEAN Business Travel-Marketing Strategy*”, “*Framework of the Development of Strategies for Adventure Market*” and “*Small Regular Passenger Exit Survey (PES) on ASEAN Brand Awareness*” on how to further capitalize on the region’s tourism potentials.

14. The Ministers noted the outcomes of the ASEAN Workshop on Crisis Management and Communications held on 25-26 February 2013 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia including the recommendation to initiate discussion with international tourism organisations on the standardisation of the tourism crisis manual and Standard Operating Procedures.

15. The Ministers agreed to focus on promotional activities on experiential and creative tourism in ASEAN in 2014 with the themes of “*Tastes of Southeast Asia*” and “*Experience Diverse Traditions and Ways of Life*” respectively.

Developing ASEAN Tourism Product

16. The Ministers expressed its appreciation to Malaysia for its support in completing the ASEAN Parks and Gardens publication. The Ministers noted the progress made in developing the ASEAN Ecotourism Strategic Plan, which would serve as an effective tool to promote sustainable economic development through the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage in the region.

17. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the ASEAN Cruise Work Plan 2013, among others, showcasing ASEAN ports and attractions through the distribution of tourism promotion collaterals and screening the ASEAN Tourism TV video at Cruise Shipping Miami 2013 and Cruise Shipping Asia-Pacific 2013 and working with the ASEAN Maritime Transport Working Group to enhance cruise development. The Ministers also noted the issues and challenges faced in developing the cruise industry in the region raised by Asia Cruise Association and tasked the officials to work with relevant ASEAN bodies to address these challenges.

18. The Ministers welcomed UNWTO’s technical assistance to further develop river-based tourism in ASEAN by formulating a plan to promote cross-border river-based tourism including the identification of river-based tourism corridors, circuits and clusters.

Enhancing Connectivity

19. The Ministers commended the enhancement of ASEAN air connectivity through the implementation of the ASEAN Open Skies agreement as well as the progress in engaging ASEAN Dialogue Partners in air services negotiation, including China, European Union, Japan and the Republic of Korea. 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 will help to further enhance business and leisure travel connectivity within and into the region.

20. The Ministers noted the outcomes of the Regional Workshop on ASEAN Common Visa held on 30 September – 1 October 2013 in Jakarta, Indonesia on addressing the issues and challenges faced in developing ASEAN Common Visa for non-ASEAN nationals and its possible implications on tourism sector. The Ministers tasked their officials to work closely with relevant agencies to facilitate the development of the ASEAN Common Visa.

Promoting ASEAN Tourism in Major Markets

21. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to ASEAN-China Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre and ASEAN-Korea Centre for their relentless support to further develop and promote ASEAN tourism to the Chinese, Japanese and Korean markets through the Tourism Documentaries in China’s National TV Network, ASEAN Local Culinary in ASEAN Festival 2013 in Yokohama on 5-6 October 2013, and ASEAN Culture and Tourism Fair on 3-6 October 2013 in Andong and Jeonju, Korea respectively.

22. The Ministers welcomed the progress made collaboration including the implementation of the Russian Language Course for ASEAN Tour Operator, tourism safety and security activities.

ASEAN Tourism Forum

23. The ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2014 held on 16-23 January 2014 in Kuching, Malaysia, with the theme of “ASEAN: Advancing Tourism Together”, was attended by 462 international buyers and 879 sellers with 353 booths as well as 75 media. The Ministers acknowledged the partnership with CNN International and CNBC as the Official Sponsor for ATF 2013.

24. The ATF 2015 will be convened in Nay Pyi Daw, Myanmar, in January 2015 with the theme of “ASEAN Tourism Towards Peace, Prosperity and Partnership”. The Philippines confirmed that they will host ATF in 2016.

25. The Ministers expressed their sincere appreciation to the Government and People of Malaysia for the warm hospitality accorded to all delegates 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. Mari Elka Pangestu, Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia;
- (iv) H.E. Mr. Chaleune Warintrasak, Vice Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR;
- (v) 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. Mr. Sombat Kuruphan, Vice Minister for Tourism and Sports, Thailand;
- (x) H.E. Mr. Ho Anh Tuan, Deputy 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.
