



THE TWENTY-FIRST MEETING OF ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS **25 January 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand**

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The Twenty-First Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers (21st M-ATM) was held on 25 January 2018 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2018 (ATF). H.E. Mr. Weerasak Kowsurat, Minister for Tourism and Sports of Thailand, chaired the Meeting and H.E. Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Thien, Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Viet Nam, was the Vice-Chairperson. The 21st M-ATM was preceded by the Forty-Seventh Meeting of ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and senior official meetings with dialogue partners.

ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025

2. The Ministers noted the progress in the implementation of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025 where 15 key activities under the Work Plan for 2016-2017 have been completed. In ensuring continued implementation of the programme, the Ministers adopted the two-year Work Plan (2018-2019), translating identified activities within ATSP 2016-2025 into concrete detailed plans with clear milestones to be achieved for the next two years. The Ministers appreciated the active role of the lead countries in leading the implementation of ATSP activities and encouraged their continued support to sustain ASEAN tourism's contribution towards the realisation of ASEAN integration goals in 2025.

Expanding the ASEAN Regional Destination-Marketing Programme

3. Based on preliminary submissions made by Member States, for 2017, ASEAN is expected to receive 125 million international visitors, exceeding the target of 121 million international tourist arrivals to the region set for Visit ASEAN@50. This new record posts a growth of 8.4 per cent from 2016, where the arrivals were dominated by intra-ASEAN travel, accounting for 42 per cent of total international arrivals. In addition to the visitor arrivals target, the targets of length of stay and revenue have also been fully achieved, with ASEAN hosting a total of 7.98 days of stay of international tourists, generating USD 93 billion from tourism in 2017.

4. The success of the Visit ASEAN@50 Campaign was attributed to various activities undertaken in 2016 and 2017, including the establishment of a Visit ASEAN@50 microsite (www.visitasean50.com), and promotional events at ITB Berlin, Korea World Travel Fair, JATA Travel Expo and China International Travel Mart. The Ministers noted the active participation of individual NTOs in promoting Visit ASEAN@50 through their national tourism marketing and promotion activities, including collaboration with their respective national flag carriers, convening national tourism events and promoting the Campaign in international events. In addition to the active participation of individual ASEAN Member States, the Ministers also acknowledged the significant support provided by ASEAN-China Centre (ACC), ASEAN-Japan Centre (AJC), ASEAN-Korea Centre (AKC), AirAsia, Mastercard, TTG,

ASEANTA and GoASEAN, and expressed their appreciation to them at the Visit ASEAN@50 appreciation ceremony.

5. The Ministers supported the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy (ATMS) 2017-2020, as an instrument to translate ATSP into a detailed plan of tourism marketing activities for ASEAN. The development of ATMS 2017-2020 provided a framework and strategic marketing direction for tourism collaboration in order to enhance the competitiveness and awareness of ASEAN as a single tourism destination and provide clear marketing directions after 2017. ATMS's primary focus is on exploring opportunities that provide the most value and allow the story of the region to be told in a creative and engaging manner through public relations and social media as effective approaches to reaching target markets together with partners.

6. Following the momentum built from the Visit ASEAN@50 Campaign, the Ministers agreed with ATMS recommendations to strengthen efforts in marketing ASEAN tourism through partnerships with international partners. In this regard, the Ministers invited international partners to establish collaboration with ASEAN to promote and market the region through mutually beneficial activities led by the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Partnership Working Group.

ASEAN Declaration on Cruise Tourism

7. The Ministers adopted the ASEAN Declaration on Cruise Tourism, highlighting the commitment of ASEAN to further develop and strengthen cruise tourism due to its potential for high economic growth. The Declaration outlines the States' commitment towards greater clarity in cruise-related policies and regulations, efficiency in processes, responsibility in business practices and capacity building. The Ministers reflected that the implementation of the Cruise Tourism Declaration could include yachting and marina activities.

Developing ASEAN Tourism Products

8. The Ministers emphasised the need to expand ASEAN tourism products through collaborative arrangements with partners, and were pleased to note the progress of the development of new ASEAN Tourism Packages involving the private sector, which would feature more than 130 tourism products covering multi-ASEAN destinations. In developing such products, the Ministers tasked senior officials to also include supporting the development of ASEAN sub-regional destinations/corridors targeting more inclusive tourism outcomes.

9. The Ministers acknowledged the integral role of gastronomy in building a competitive destination brand and its ability to be a key driver to achieve inclusiveness, and thus encouraged cooperation between ASEAN Member States to support the development of sustainable food production and consumption, and promote deeper understanding on gastronomic tourism in Southeast Asia. The Ministers adopted the Joint Declaration on Gastronomy Tourism, aimed at establishing the region's gastronomy platform for knowledge sharing to substantially expand ASEAN gastronomic experiences.

Driving Investments in Infrastructure to Keep Pace with Tourism Growth

10. ASEAN tourism sector has registered sensational growth in recent years. The Ministers recognized the need for rapid expansion of investment in infrastructure and facilities in the private sector to keep pace with this phenomenal growth. The Ministers acknowledged the urgency to expand and upgrade infrastructure and facilities, and thus supported the Philippines to undertake collection of ASEAN conditions opportunities and concurrently

supporting Myanmar's effort in the implementation of related investment "guidelines" on rules and regulations. The Ministers agreed that, in line with the policy of transparency of, this investment portfolio should be announced publicly to generate interest among international investors, and eventually, the international investments in ASEAN tourism sector. The Ministers applauded the effort taken by Malaysia for the collaboration with ASEAN-Korea Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre and ASEAN-China Centre in organising the ASEAN Plus Three Tourism Investment Seminar in Korea, Japan and China from 2018 to 2020. The Ministers also urged the AMS to actively participate in the seminar by sending speakers and participants to join the seminar.

Moving Forward toward "Accessible Tourism for All"

11. As follow-up to the decision made during ATF 2017 and the results of UNWTO's World Tourism Day 2016 in Bangkok, the Ministers discussed the need for ASEAN to further progress the inclusive tourism in the region. Noting that inclusive tourism has extreme significance, both socially and economically, the Ministers encouraged Member States to further invest in related tourism infrastructure to further realise market potential by bringing better accessibility for all particularly to people with disabilities, senior citizens, women and children. The investment may involve the private sector, through incentive schemes for investors and service providers along with further improvement and revision of rules and regulations that would promote private investments in the expansion and upgrade of infrastructure, facilities and services.

Tourism Standards

12. The ASEAN Tourism Standards Awards took place on 26 January 2018 in Chiang Mai. There were 47 awardees for the ASEAN Green Hotel Award, 47 awardees for the ASEAN MICE Venue Award, and 23 awardees for the ASEAN Clean Tourist City Award. The Ministers noted the progress of adding two new categories to the ASEAN MICE Venue Standard for the Meeting Room category, namely: (1) Meeting Room in Convention and Exhibition Center setting; and (2) Meeting Room in Public/Private Sector setting.

13. The Ministers noted the conclusion of the Guideline for ASEAN Sustainable Tourism Award (ASTA) as one of the deliverables for Lao PDR's ASEAN Chairmanship. In this regard, the Ministers awarded 17 institutions that have fulfilled ASTA's criteria and requirements for the nature-based theme. The adoption of ASTA is expected to facilitate the adoption of existing ASEAN Tourism Standards and reward local communities and public-private participation in the value chain.

Enhancing Quality of Tourism Professionals

14. The Ministers noted the completion of all 242 toolboxes for all divisions under the Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals (MRA TP), and completion of training for Master Trainers and Master Assessors for respective divisions. In strengthening efforts to support its implementation, a study to develop a new five-year MRA Work Plan 2018-2022 is being carried out with the support of the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme (AADCP) II. The Ministers emphasised the need to review implementation of the MRA TP, including identifying various factors and trends that may affect the response to this mechanism. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the Second International Conference on MRA-TP to be held in June 2018 in Cambodia. The convening of this Conference would raise awareness on the benefits of MRA-TP and enhance the buy-

in for the ASEAN Tourism Professional Registration System and further boost the implementation of MRA as a tool to promote the tourism service quality of the regions.

15. The Ministers were pleased with the progress of drafting a Host Country Agreement for the full establishment of the Regional Secretariat for the Implementation of the MRA-TP in Jakarta Indonesia, and tasked senior officials to start the Secretariat's operations in 2018. In line with ATSP 2016-2025, the Ministers noted progress of expansion of MRA implementation to the MICE industry, based on the requirements and needs of the industry of ASEAN Member States. The Ministers thanked the Government of Australia for their continued support in the operationalization of the MRA-TP through the AADCP II.

Enhancing connectivity for tourism

16. The Ministers were pleased with the signing of the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Cross Border Transport of Passengers by Road Vehicles (CBTP) by ASEAN Transport Ministers. This would facilitate seamless cross-border mobility of passengers and promote overland travel between ASEAN Member States, particularly those traveling by bus and coaches. In further facilitating land travel within ASEAN, the Ministers noted the development of studies on "Promoting Drive/Overland Tourism Across ASEAN through Recognition of Domestic Driving Licenses Issued by ASEAN Countries", and "Promote Development of Road Connectivity along Major Tourism Corridors".

17. The Ministers noted with interest the progress made on the ASEAN Common Visa initiative by the Ad Hoc Working Group on ASEAN Common Visa, and looked forward to the development of this initiative to further boost tourism into ASEAN.

18. The Ministers acknowledged the current effort of five member countries namely Cambodia, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, in the formation of Lancang-Mekong Tourist Cities Cooperation Alliance with China following the meeting on 17th November 2017 in Kunming, PRC. The issues pertaining to its establishment and implementation will be on the NTOs' agenda for further discussions.

ASEAN Tourism Forum

19. The ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2018 held from 22-26 January 2018 in Chiang Mai with the theme of "ASEAN – Sustainable Connectivity, Boundless Prosperity" was attended by 240 buyers, 650 sellers and 894 exhibitors. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to CNN International as the International Cable and Satellite Media Partner of ATF 2018.

20. The Ministers noted that the ATF 2019 would be held from 14-18 January 2019 in Ha Long Bay, Viet Nam with the theme "ASEAN-the Power of One". ATF 2020 will be hosted in Brunei Darussalam.

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

LIST OF MINISTERS

The Meeting was attended by:

- (i) H.E. Dato Ali Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, 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. Prof. Dr. Bosengkham Vongdara, 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. U Ohn Maung, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar;
- (vii) H.E. Mr. Benito C. Bengzon, Jr., Undersecretary of Tourism, Philippines;
- (viii) H.E. Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Singapore;
- (ix) H.E. Mr. Weerasak Kowsurat, Minister for Tourism and Sports, Thailand;
- (x) H.E. Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Thien, Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Viet Nam; and
- (xi) H.E. Mr. Hirubalan V P, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Political Security Community.
