



## **THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MUTUAL RECOGNITION ARRANGEMENT ON TOURISM PROFESSIONALS (MRA-TP)**

**8-9 August 2016, Jakarta, Indonesia**

### **MEDIA STATEMENT**

#### **International Conference**

1. The International Conference on Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) was held by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia co-organised with the ASEAN Secretariat on 8-9 August 2016 in Jakarta.
2. The Conference was officially commenced by H.E. Dr. Arief Yahya, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia. In his opening statement, he expressed his warm welcome to all Tourism Ministers, National Tourism Organisations (NTOs), representatives of ASEAN Centers and other international tourism organisations, as well as participants of the Conference. Minister Arief Yahya highlighted significant progress of ASEAN tourism illustrated by its sustained positive annual growth of more than 8 percent for international visitor arrivals in the past 5 years, leading to a creation of 29 million jobs in 2014. He further cited an active ASEAN tourism collaboration that has achieved progress in many joint initiatives, such as joint marketing, the establishment of ASEAN tourism standards, and implementation of the Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP). He emphasised that the establishment of MRA-TP not only fulfills Leaders' commitment of formulating non-restrictive arrangements stipulated within ASEAN Tourism Agreement signed in 2002, but also supports the enhancement of quality tourism services by improving tourism professionals' standards within the region. Through this implementation, The Minister expected that tourism not only could bring a more holistic betterment to ASEAN People's life, but also to achieve a "People-Centered, People- Oriented ASEAN".
3. The Conference was highly successful in bringing together high-level government officials from ASEAN, international tourism organisations, UN agencies, hotels, tourism associations, industries, educational/training institutions and the media with an aim to increase awareness among the various stakeholders of the MRA-TP. International speakers and moderators shared on the benefits and challenges in the implementation of MRA-TP in various sectors, namely, the government, tourism industry, educational/training institutions, certification boards, international organisations and donors.
4. The Conference addressed a wide range of topics on the MRA-TP, with the key areas highlighted below:
  - a) Expansion of the MRA-TP to cover other areas, such as job-titles of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) as well as spa-wellness professionals;

- b) Usage of English as a basic communication requirement for implementation of the MRA-TP, including possible mechanisms to assist potential trainees to fulfil this requirement;
- c) Facilitate and support potential participation of training and educational institutions in respective ASEAN Member States;
- d) Strengthen collaboration amongst industries, training and educational institutions, and governments through the respective National Tourism Professional Boards (NTPB) to facilitate the exchange of best practices and align and update regional and/or international tourism competencies and curricula; and
- e) Improve facilitation on registration for ASEAN Tourism Professionals and related stakeholders through the ASEAN Tourism Professional Registration System.

### **ASEAN MRA-TP Forum**

5. The ASEAN MRA-TP Forum, held in conjunction with the Conference, was attended by Head of Delegates of NTOs of ASEAN Member States. Views were exchanged on the implementation of MRA-TP and its roles in improving quality tourism services, challenges faced and how to move this forward.

6. The Forum acknowledged the progress made by the ASEAN Member States in promoting the MRA-TP in the respective ASEAN Member States. Certified Tourism Professionals under the MRA-TP would support Member States in developing ASEAN into a Quality Tourism Destination as indicated in the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025.

#### *Supporting infrastructure*

7. The Forum agreed on the need for a strong supporting infrastructure of MRA on Tourism Professionals. This could consist of clear guidelines and mechanisms, updated toolboxes and a common ASEAN tourism curriculum. In this regard, the Forum noted the establishment of the Regional Secretariat for the implementation of the MRA-TP to be based in Jakarta, Indonesia, with the Agreement signed on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2015. This Secretariat will be functioned to (i) enhance awareness, provide capacity building on the MRA-TP; (ii) develop, maintain and update the ATPRS, and (iii) formulate, update and recommend the necessary mechanisms.

8. An Ad-Hoc team was established to coordinate the transition phase of the Regional Secretariat set-up.

#### *Building capabilities*

9. The Forum noted the efforts of the Member States to sustain the significant growth of tourism development in the region. Noting the high demand for ASEAN Tourism Professionals in response to this growth, the Forum suggested that ASEAN could consider conducting a study on the skills gap, and identify MRA-TP-related measures to fill this gap.

10. The Forum noted the usefulness of the conference and hoped to see more such conferences where industry and governments can come together to exchange views. It is expected that the future conferences will have more fruitful sessions in parallel. In addition, the conferences will also exhibit training education and tourism institutions.

#### *Greater collaboration*

11. The ASEAN Heads of Delegation who were present at the Forum, launched the first phase of

the ATPRS ([www.atprs.org](http://www.atprs.org)) to provide the tourism industry a glimpse of the portal. The ATPRS, which is still work in progress, is a web-based platform to facilitate the registration of tourism professionals and MRA related stakeholders, and match tourism professionals to potential employers.

12. The Forum recognised the importance of collaboration amongst stakeholders, training and educational institutions, industry and development partners to further strengthen the implementation of the MRA-TP. The Forum welcomed new initiatives from various stakeholders including the following possible projects/activities:

- a) Collaboration with industries to promote in-house training programmes using the ASEAN MRA-TP toolboxes;
- b) Implementation of apprenticeship programmes with the industries;
- c) Development of the Recognition of Prior Learning Assessment Mechanism as a tool to assess and certify those that have relevant experience; and
- d) Identification of Education and Training Centres in each Member State as Centres of Excellence for MRA Implementation.

13. The Forum acknowledged the contribution made by the Government of Australia, to support the ASEAN MRA through the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme II. The Forum also expressed appreciation to GIZ, German Agency for Development and International Cooperation, for their support to the CLMV countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam through the Initiative ASEAN Integration (IAI) Project.

14. The Forum expressed their sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Ministry of Tourism, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for their warm hospitality and the excellent organisation of the conference, as well as their contribution to support and host the Jakarta-based Regional Secretariat on the ASEAN MRA-TP.

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