



## **PAKSE DECLARATION ON ASEAN ROADMAP FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM CLUSTERS AND TOURISM CORRIDORS**

We, Tourism Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) attending the ASEAN Ecotourism Forum 2016, in Pakse, Champasak Province, Lao PDR from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016 hosted by the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism of Lao PDR;

**REAFFIRMING** the ideals and principles laid down in the Charter of the ASEAN;

**NOTING** the United Nations declaration of International Year of Ecotourism 2002 as well as the World Ecotourism Summit 2002, producing the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism; and the UN Resolution adopted in December 2010 on promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environmental protection;

**NOTING** the 1st World Ecotourism Conference producing the Vientiane Declaration on Ecotourism for Developing Countries (2009) endorsed by World Tourism Organisations (UNWTO);

**RECOGNISING** the leadership and commitment of the Government of Lao PDR, Chair of ASEAN 2016 and as host country of this ASEAN Ecotourism Forum 2016 with the theme “ASEAN Without Borders: Roadmap for Strategic Development of Ecotourism Clusters and Tourism Corridors”;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that ecotourism is one of the sustainable forms of tourism that enables the tourists to experience and understand the nature and rich biodiversity of the region and at the same time generate the socio-economic benefits for the local communities living in harmony with the nature especially in the remote and rural areas within the ASEAN region;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the limitations of this consultative process to incorporate the input of related tourism and development bodies and organisations, international development assistance and funding organisations and regional financial institutions;

**RECOGNISING** the potential complementary roles and objectives of UNWTO, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ASEAN centres, dialogue partners, international civil societies, institutions and organisations participating in the Forum, and in particular, ASEAN’s core mandate, which includes fostering international and regional cooperation;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the role of international tourism stakeholders who are developing multi-national tour itineraries, touring routes and special interest tour programmes in the region;

**MINDFUL** of the various principal, strategic plans, agreements and declarations promoting regional cooperation for tourism in the last decade:

- Plan of Action for ASEAN Cooperation in Tourism (1998), a strategic document, which includes but not limited to marketing the ASEAN region as a single tourist destination and Facilitating Seamless Intra-ASEAN Travel;
- ASEAN Tourism Agreement (2002);
- ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks (2003);
- ASEAN Declaration on Enhancing ASEAN Tourism Cooperation (2004);
- Langkawi Declaration on Shifting Paradigm, Prospering The Region by the ASEAN Tourism Ministers (2005);
- ASEAN Ecotourism Strategic Plan on policies, strategies and action plans to improve the planning, management and operation of eco-tourism sites, products and services in ASEAN;
- ASEAN Multilateral Agreement on Air Services;
- ASEAN Multilateral Agreement on the Full Liberalisation of Passenger Air Services (MAFLPAS) and its Protocols facilitating and enhancing air services connectivity within the region;
- ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy (2012-2015) to support and build worldwide recognition of ASEAN as a tourism destination, in part by coordinating and leveraging the power and influence of the ASEAN NTOs;
- ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (2011-2015), a joint collaboration in further developing four main ASEAN tourism products, namely: nature, cultural and heritage, community, and cruise and river-based tourism;
- ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (2016-2025), which among others, supports the development of sub-regional destinations/corridors targeting more inclusive tourism outcomes; and
- ASEAN Member States' respective regulations, and/or policies towards Sustainable Tourism or Ecotourism practices.

**RECOGNISING** that this Declaration is in alignment with the vision of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (2016-2025) where by 2025, ASEAN will be a quality tourism destination offering a unique, diverse ASEAN experience, and will be committed to responsible, sustainable, inclusive and balanced tourism development, so as to contribute significantly to the socioeconomic well-being of ASEAN people.

**And in pursuance of the following aspirations,**

- Developing an ASEAN coordinated roadmap to strategically identify, plan and develop a trans-regional network of ecotourism sites which are linked to major intra-ASEAN transportation routes including overland highways, waterways and inter-islands connection (tourism corridors).
- Developing a network of tourism corridors that traverse the urban and rural areas of ASEAN Member States, facilitating the accessibility as to enable tourists to travel to all ecotourism sites especially nature reserves to experience the essence of ASEAN's ecotourism products and services.

- Creating employment and uplifting communities, promoting wise approach to economic utilisation of natural resources and transforming impoverished rural areas along the tourism corridors, thereby unlocking economic opportunities through ecotourism businesses including community-driven enterprises such as a small and medium accommodation, food and beverage as well as other tourism services.
- Developing and improving the accessibility of ecotourism sites in ASEAN in its proper context will further highlight the region to the world and its contribution in the protection and safeguarding of natural resources and biodiversity.
- Unlocking rural areas, empowering rural communities and expanding economic opportunities for tourism investors.

**DO HEREBY DECLARE** the following affirmative actions:

- **ESTABLISH**, where relevant, a regional inventory of ecotourism sites within ASEAN including but not limited to protected areas, national parks, and nature and wildlife reserves;
- **IDENTIFY**, plan and develop sustainably an inter-connected network of ecotourism destinations and sites (ecotourism clusters) across ASEAN Member States, which are linked to major overland roads, waterways, sea or air routes (tourism corridors);
- **ENCOURAGE** concerted action for the balanced sustainable development of ecotourism, through partnerships between relevant stakeholders;
- **ENCOURAGE**, where appropriate, the possibility of making reference to the relevant programmes and frameworks of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP) as well as ASEAN centres, organisations, financial institutions and countries outside the region to potentially cooperate in the field of ecotourism development in ASEAN;
- **ENCOURAGE** establishing a high profile public-private partnership Regional Network under Chairmanship of Lao PDR, with the participation of national, regional and international experts, and having the mandate to develop a Road Map laying the foundation for developing comprehensive and sustainable ecotourism clusters and tourism corridors, a Conceptual and Operational Strategy to undertake this ambitious initiative; and an Action Plan for its practical implementation through integrated policies and actions;
- **DEVELOP** a comprehensive and informative ASEAN ecotourism under the existing ASEAN Tourism website ; and
- **TASK** relevant ASEAN Tourism Committees to formulate action plans in order to implement the Pakse Declaration.

Adopted in Pakse, Champasak Province, Lao PDR on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2016