



ASEAN PLUS THREE FRAMEWORK ON ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS FOR TOURISM DESTINATIONS

BACKGROUND

The Philippines as chair of the ASEAN Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Development Committee (ASITDC) will promote sustainable tourism and people-to-people connectivity through the implementation of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 (ATSP 2016-2025) with the cooperation of the Plus Three Countries (China, Japan, Korea) on developing responsible, sustainable, accessible, inclusive and balanced tourism.

Being the lead country coordinator in the development and implementation of environment management standards for sustainable tourism underscored in the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Tourism Cooperation Workplan 2018-2020, the Philippines hosted the ASEAN Plus Three Environment Management Standards Forum held on 25 July 2019 in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines. The said forum aimed to develop the APT Framework on Environment Management Standards for Tourism Destinations.

FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

1. To serve as a guideline for action plan formulation in the development of environmental management standards of tourism destinations
2. To propose a checklist for the overall sustainability of tourism destinations to determine a baseline for the environmental management standards of tourism destinations

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE FRAMEWORK

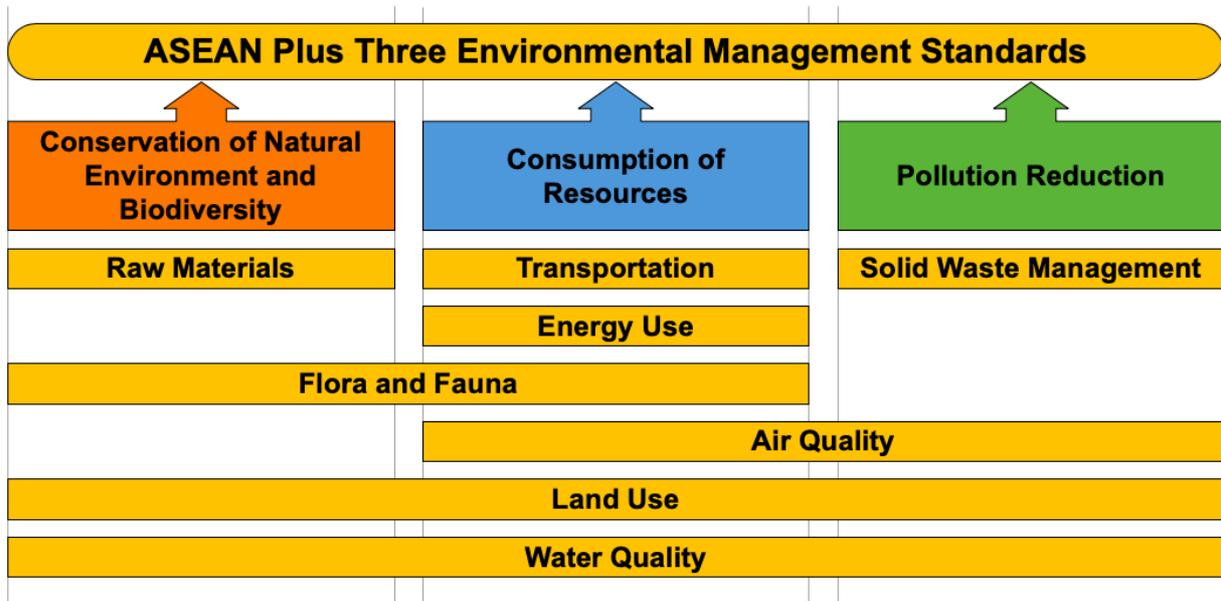
Issues and Concerns



To be able to develop environmental management standards for tourism destinations, it is important to first look at the issues and concerns that these destinations are plagued with.



It is viewed that, out of the inputs and submissions of the ASEAN Plus Three countries, the following areas are reflective of the commonalities of the issues faced by nature-based destinations, or of destinations experiencing over-tourism or the uncontrolled influx of tourists in a given destination. These issues also include the proper management of waste material and pollution coming from tourism-related services, and the massive resources required and consumed by tourism among others.



In the first area of concern, *Conservation of Natural Environment and Biodiversity*, the main idea is that for tourism destinations to contribute to and uphold the conservation of the area’s existing natural resources, in terms of land use, water quality, raw materials, flora and fauna composition.

The second area of concern, *Consumption of Resources*, is for tourism destinations to promote minimal consumption of resources, or only that which is necessary to sustain the everyday needs of a destination. These include land use, water quality, flora and fauna, air quality, energy, and transportation. This area should also take into consideration that access to these resources by local communities should not be diminished.

The third area for concern, *Pollution Reduction*, is refers to the minimization of the release of pollution in the air, water, and land ecosystems of a tourism destination. Forms of contamination could be through microplastics in the water, garbage strewn about in public places, or the coliform levels of the bodies of water.

It is encouraged that these core issues be addressed by the APT in the interest of sustainability of the tourism destinations.



Sustainable Development in the Tourism Sector



According to the Brundtland Report, “Our Common Future”, sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Over this years, this definition has translated to sustainable development having three pillars of sustainability: economic, social and environmental aspects.

The social aspect of sustainable tourism development, Social Equity, implies equity over equality. Both can be measures of fairness, but equity focuses more on giving everyone what they need to be successful, similar to tourism destinations in the manner of supporting those who are of lesser capacity for them to benefit from the opportunities provided by tourism development. Social Equity in tourism ensures providing more benefit to local communities, better employment opportunities, channeling income to those in need, and raising the standard of living. The overall quality of life of people involved in the tourism industry is improved, public participation is more equally represented, respect for socio-cultural values is upheld, and personal development and fulfillment is enhanced for communities involved.

The economic aspect of sustainable tourism development, Economic Efficiency takes into consideration the viability for the economy to work successfully within sustainable tourism development. Economic Efficiency is not only about the viability of the enterprises engaged in tourism and related economic activities in the destination but the viability of the destination itself to support the economic activity of tourism.

The environmental aspect of sustainable tourism development, Conservation of the Environment, completes the goal of sustainable tourism through the proper use of the environment and all components related to it whether the landscape, seascape and biodiversity. This entails the conservation of biodiversity with reference to wildlife, plants and habitats being some of the key elements present in a nature-based tourism destination, the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources, and integration of conservation activities in the tourism products to further the awareness and maintain, even enhance, its support systems.



Like any initiative towards sustainable development, sustainable tourism cannot be achieved without involving all three pillars in the process: social equity, economic efficiency, and environmental conservation.

Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism



Management of tourism destinations is a joint responsibility of all stakeholders involved, who are therefore held accountable for the tourism industry's sustainable growth. It is crucial that these stakeholders are involved in the process of the development of environmental management standards. These stakeholders are identified as:

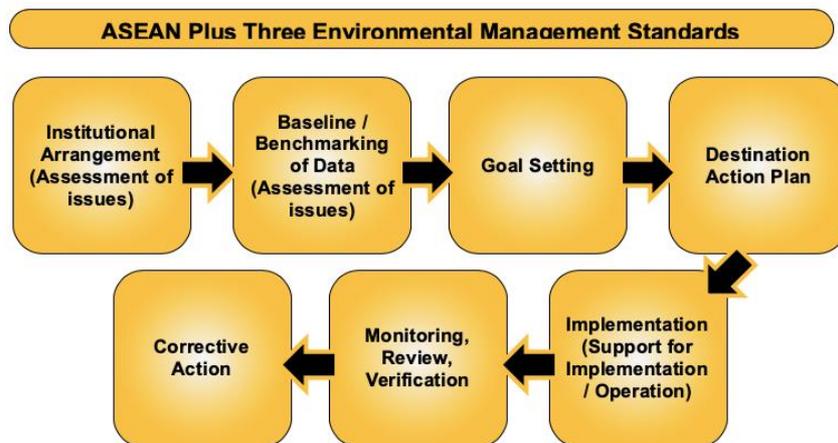
1. The Government Bodies or the public sector – those in charge of policy formulation and in the setting up of regulations that are needed to establish an environmentally-sound tourism industry, may it be through laws, plans, or other government initiated actions.
2. The Tourism Private Sector – the lifeblood of the tourism industry in keeping businesses running and for the economic activities to be sustained.
3. Non-Governmental Organizations – the devoted partners in the advocacy of sustainable tourism development providing technical expertise and/or other forms of coordination and support from the sectors or sub-sectors they represent.
4. Specialized Media – the primary partners that can disseminate information and relevant news, as well as support the cause of sustainable tourism development through established channels of communication.
5. Experts – the consolidators of knowledge which allows for more data to be considered as we move towards an evidence-based approach of management.
6. The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) or recently referred to as the Voluntary Sector - their advocacies and commitment on the ground allows for



the promulgation of the principles of sustainable tourism development and in the policies and responsible practices they promote.

7. Tourists - the consumers or the demand that fuels the economic mechanism of the destination.
8. The Local Communities - one of the key beneficiaries of the adoption of sustainable tourism principles wherein through their participation we anchor the ideals of a socially equitable destination

Role of Environmental Management Standards in Achieving Sustainable Destinations



The development of environmental management standards for tourism destinations is crucial for achieving the goal of a Sustainable Tourism Industry for the ASEAN Plus Three. The following process is a sample method, which follows the principles of the PDCA (plan–do–check– act) method based on ISO 9001:2015, that shows the relevance of the creation of such standards.

1. **Institutional arrangement or the assessment of issues** within the institutions identified to manage and implement the standards. This entails the review of the leadership structure, their policies, as well as defining clearly the roles, responsibilities, and authorities to be involved.
2. **Baseline/benchmarking of data** and the accompanying assessment or auditing of issues using the available information and gathering of additional reference material. This may include environmental hotspots analysis to pinpoint key issues and the possible streamlining with current or proposed metrics at baseline year or point.
3. Development of environmental management standards. Using the benchmarked data from the tourism destinations, standards for such areas can then be drafted, which are to be reviewed by all relevant stakeholders. The final set of standards can then be used to identify objectives or targets for a particular tourism destination within an agreed and feasible timeline. These objectives are divided into *qualitative objectives* (e.g. efficiency of mobility, visual scenery, etc.) and *Quantitative objectives* (e.g. Greenhouse Gases



(GHG) emissions reduction, data on number of citizens or tourists using public transportation, etc.)

4. Using the identified objectives, tourism authorities can then begin **formulation of a destination action plan**, which is the process for destination managers, based on the institutional arrangement, to develop strategic implementations of necessary actions to achieve identified objectives.
5. **Implementation of the destination action plan** is divided into two steps: a) support to implementation and, b) actual implementation of the action plan. Support for implementation refers to allocation of resources (HR, financial, technological), the awareness of stakeholders (LGU, tourists, residents/locals), accessibility and utilization of channels of communication to actualize the execution. Actual implementation implies the need for strategies such as development of site infrastructures for protection, local product development, sustainable procurement, resource efficiency, promotion of a healthy circular and inclusive economy, ecological and human safety, as well as putting the necessary restrictions or limitations, among others.
6. **Monitoring, Review, and Verification.** Evaluation on the implementation of the action plan entails cross-checking at regular intervals within the timeframe if the goals are on track and/or standards are met, as well as identification of any corrective actions to attain closer achievement of such goals/standards.
7. **Application of corrective action** or modification to the implementation action plan as needed.

WAY FORWARD

1. The APT Framework on Environment Management Standard for Tourism Destinations is planned to be completed and presented to the APT NTOs to be adopted by the APT Tourism Ministers Meeting in January of 2020 on the occasion of ASEAN Tourism Forum in Brunei Darussalam.
2. Following the adoption of the said Framework, the ground work shall be initiated to formulate the Action Plan on the development of the Environment Management Standards planned for 2020.
3. With the conclusion of the APT Tourism Cooperation Work Plan in 2020, the Philippines envisions that the Action Plan shall be ready for endorsement to be included in the succeeding APT Tourism Cooperation Work Plan beyond 2020.

-----END-----