



## **THE 27<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS**

**25 January 2024, Vientiane, Lao PDR**

### **Joint Media Statement**

1. The 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers (M-ATM) was held on 25 January 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. H.E. Suanesavanh Vignaket, Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR, chaired the Meeting. H.E. Dato Sri Tiong King Sing, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia, was the Vice Chair. The 27<sup>th</sup> M-ATM was preceded by the 59<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and other Senior Official Meetings with Dialogue Partners.

2. The Meeting focused its discussion on the implementation of activities under the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025, as well as other key priorities in 2023-2024 to further support the speedy recovery of the tourism sector. In line with the theme of “Quality and Responsible Tourism: Sustaining ASEAN Future”, the Meeting emphasised the importance of forging closer collaboration among the ASEAN Member States in all relevant sectors to ensure the sustainability and resiliency of ASEAN tourism.

3. The Meeting noted that based on the preliminary figures of 2023, ASEAN saw a 153.09% year-on-year increase in international arrivals.

4. The Meeting was pleased to note that 49 out of 64 activities under the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025, or 76.6%, have been implemented. The Meeting encouraged ASEAN Member States to continue implementing the activities under the ATSP 2016-2025 as planned. With regard to the development of the ATSP post-2025, the Meeting agreed to task the ASEAN NTOs to start developing the subsequent Strategic Plan in 2024 in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders including other ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, private sector and academia. The Meeting emphasised that the post-2025 Strategic Plan should be in line with the subsequent document to the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint post-2025. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the Philippines for leading the development of the ATSP post-2025.

5. The Meeting commended the effort and commitment by ASEAN Member States in implementing the Post-COVID-19 Recovery Plan for ASEAN Tourism. The Meeting noted

that 60% of the measures and activities under the Recovery Plan have been completed or are being implemented through the ATSP Work Plan. The Meeting encouraged ASEAN Member States to review the priority activities under the Recovery Plan in order to ensure that they are aligned with the ATSP 2016-2025 and other key initiatives.

### **Strengthening ASEAN Tourism Competitiveness**

6. The Meeting noted with satisfaction, the successful launch of the three marketing campaigns in 2023, namely Southeast Asia Travel Collective, imaginASEAN and intra-ASEAN Tourism Recovery Campaign.

7. Southeast Asia Travel Collective was done in partnership with Victorinox, an established luggage brand, with the objective to inspire travel to the region. The campaign was launched on April 2023 with landing page on Victorinox's website featuring an introduction on tourism destinations in the region, alongside specifically curated collections for respective ASEAN Member States.

8. ImaginASEAN was launched on the occasion of ASEAN Day on 8 August 2023. Supported by Agoda and AirAsia, the online competition encouraged potential travellers to imagine themselves experiencing the region's diverse attractions and earned entry points to the contest by answering a survey and submitting videos via the online platform. From nearly 2,500 worldwide participants, three winners were shortlisted to win prizes including round-trip airfare, accommodation, and access to attractions.

9. The subsequent Intra-ASEAN Tourism Recovery Campaign was launched on 27 September 2023 during World Tourism Day, with support from Global Affairs Canada through the Canadian Trade and Investment Facility for Development. With the theme "*Your Dream Holiday, Closer Than You Think*", the primary objective of this campaign is to encourage ASEAN residents and travellers in Southeast Asia to explore the distinctive characteristics of the region including the welcoming people, the opportunities for ecotourism and adventure, as well as the diverse and flavourful cuisine across the region.

10. The Meeting also commended the success of the Interface Meeting between ASEAN Tourism Ministers and ASEAN Transport Ministers as the first high-level cross-sectoral collaboration between two key sectors to advance the economic recovery in the region. The Meeting recalled the decision to establish an Ad-hoc Task Force comprising of representatives appointed by the ASEAN NTOs and the ASEAN Senior Transport Officials Meeting (STOM) to facilitate dialogues with the relevant agencies to ensure a more systematic and coherent approach. As such, the Meeting looked forward to the development of the Terms of References (TOR) for the Ad-hoc Task Force.

11. The Meeting endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and UNWTO, which covers 4 focus areas including tourism competitiveness, capability development/ capacity building, as well as sustainability and inclusivity.

12. The Meeting expressed appreciation to Lao PDR for taking the initiative to develop the ASEAN Ecotourism Standard as a Priority Economic Deliverable for 2024 under the Lao PDR's ASEAN Chairmanship. The Meeting noted the development progress of the Standard and looked forward to the conclusion and adoption of the ASEAN Ecotourism Standard in 2024. The Meeting is also pleased to note the progress of the implementation of Pakse Declaration on ASEAN Roadmap for Strategic Development of Ecotourism Clusters and Tourism Corridors to reinforce the region as a single, sustainable, and inclusive tourism destination envisioned under ATSP 2016-2025.

13. The Meeting further noted that during the ASEAN Tourism Standards Awards Ceremony held on 26 January 2024, 46 establishments in the region were honoured with the 9<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Green Hotel Award, 22 entities were honoured with the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Clean Tourist City Award, 43 establishments were honoured with the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN MICE Venue Award (Category Meeting Room), 32 establishments honoured with the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN MICE Venue Award (Category Exhibition Venue), 33 honoured with the 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN MICE Venue Award (Category Event Venue), 9 establishments were honoured with the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Sustainable Tourism Award (Gastronomy Tourism theme; Rural Sustainable Product Category), and 7 establishments were honoured with the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Sustainable Tourism Award (Gastronomy Tourism theme; Urban Sustainable Product Category). The Meeting encouraged ASEAN Member States to further promote the ASEAN Tourism Standards within their respective countries to increase the region's competitiveness.

### **Advancing Human Resources in the Tourism Sector**

14. The Meeting was pleased to note that ASEAN Member States continued to implement the Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) through capability building training for Tourism Professionals, National Master Trainers and National Master Assessors. The Meeting acknowledged the need to address the shortage of qualified Tourism Professionals due to the movement of labour to different sectors after the COVID-19 pandemic hit the region. In this regard, the Meeting emphasised the importance of providing ASEAN Tourism Professionals with the appropriate training, assessment and certification, latest knowledge and skills upgrade to ensure that they remain relevant and adaptive to the industry change. The Meeting welcomed the inclusion of MICE Professionals and Spa Professionals in MRA-TP and recommended the preparation of the implementation activities. The Meeting agreed in principle to the operationalisation of the Regional Secretariat of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals following the review of its sustainability model. The Meeting renewed high appreciation to Indonesia for hosting the Regional Secretariat.

15. The Meeting congratulated the implementation of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on ASEAN MRA-TP, back-to-back with the ASEAN Plus Three Tourism Training and

Education Network (APTTTEN) Forum 2023 which was held on 8-9 May 2023 in Bandung, Indonesia. The Meeting encouraged ASEAN Member States to organise similar events on an annual basis to greatly promote and increase awareness of ASEAN MRA-TP both domestically and regionally.

### **Ensuring Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Development for All**

16. The Meeting commended the work related to the development of the Action Roadmap for Sustainable Tourism Development in ASEAN and expressed appreciation to Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) for their support on this initiative. The Meeting endorsed the Action Roadmap which aims to provide guidance for ASEAN in areas such as core values, innovation for sustainability, and ways to empower relevant stakeholders to be more sustainable. The Meeting also noted that the Action Roadmap sets broad targets for ASEAN Member States, given the varied stages of sustainable development in the region.

17. The Meeting acknowledged the more important roles of ASEAN tourism partners including the private sectors in engaging and joining AMS's effort to further promote ASEAN tourism towards competitiveness, sustainability, and inclusiveness. The Meeting noted the need to establish and ensure a proper and responsive platform to engage tourism-related private sectors.

18. The Meeting noted on the progress related to the implementation of the Phnom Penh Declaration on Transforming ASEAN Tourism. Cambodia, as the Lead Country Coordinator, is preparing three products under this project namely (i) ASEAN Guidelines on Digital Literacy in Tourism Sector, (ii) ASEAN Guideline on Green Tourism Businesses, and (iii) Recommendations on ASEAN Tourism Green Funding.

### **ASEAN Tourism Forum**

19. The ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2024 was held from 22-27 January 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR, with the theme of "Quality and Responsible Tourism: Sustaining ASEAN Future". 250 international sellers and exhibitors, 126 buyers, and 108 domestic and international media attended ATF 2024.

20. The Meeting noted that ATF 2025 would be held from 19 to 25 January 2025 in Malaysia, with the theme of "Unity in Motion: Shaping ASEAN's Tourism Tomorrow".