



THE 28TH MEETING OF ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS

19 January 2025, Johor, Malaysia

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The 28th Meeting of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers (M-ATM) took place on 19 January 2025, in Johor, Malaysia, under the chairmanship of H.E. Dato Sri Tiong King Sing, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia. This meeting was preceded by the 61st Meeting of the ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and other Senior Official Meetings with Dialogue Partners.
2. The Meeting focused on discussing the implementation of activities outlined in the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025, as well as the development of the ASEAN tourism sectoral plan for 2026-2030 to further strengthen the tourism and hospitality industry. The Meeting emphasised the importance of enhancing collaboration among ASEAN Member States and with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, to achieve a more sustainable and resilient ASEAN tourism sector.
3. The Meeting was pleased to note a positive growth in 2024 as ASEAN Member States are implementing more robust policies and initiatives including the relaxing of the visa application for international travellers and diversification of tourism offerings. Preliminary figures showed that by the end of 2024, ASEAN welcomed over 123 million visitors, a 30.6% growth from 2023.
4. The Meeting was pleased to note that approximately 70% of the activities under the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025 have been completed. The Meeting encouraged partners to join hands with ASEAN to accelerate the implementation of the remaining activities, ensuring the successful conclusion of the Strategic Plan by 2025. Regarding the development of the ASEAN Tourism Sectoral Plan 2026-2030, the Meeting agreed to align it with the priorities outlined in the ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026-2030, which promotes a sustainable and resilient region through stronger cooperation.
5. The Meeting urged relevant stakeholders to advance the implementation of activities under the Post-COVID-19 Recovery Plan for ASEAN Tourism, as this will significantly benefit the region.
6. The Meeting also noted that it is vital to standardise the ASEAN Tourism Performance using visitor data to generate more accurate and comprehensive data related to economic contributions. Additionally, considering the strong and positive relationship between ASEAN and Australia over the past years, the Meeting suggested

establishing an ASEAN-Australia Mechanism to further strengthen and consolidate this partnership.

Strengthening ASEAN Tourism Competitiveness

7. The Meeting welcomed the successful launch of the tourism marketing campaign, “ImaginASEAN Metaverse Game,” on World Tourism Day 2024. This innovative initiative bridges tourism and digital technology, offering an immersive experience that transcends physical boundaries. The campaign underscores the transformative role of tourism in fostering cultural exchange, driving economic growth, and building mutual understanding among diverse communities. The “ImaginASEAN Metaverse Game” exemplifies ASEAN's commitment to leveraging digital innovation to position Southeast Asia as a premier single tourism destination. The Meeting encouraged the continued exploration of digital marketing strategies to engage global audiences, particularly targeting younger, tech-savvy travellers.

8. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the ongoing progress in promoting ASEAN Cruise Tourism. Through active participation in events such as Seatrade Cruise Global (SCG)—the largest annual global cruise event—ASEAN continues to position Southeast Asia as an attractive and competitive cruise region. The Meeting also called for enhanced collaboration with private sector stakeholders to develop port infrastructure, design varied sailing itineraries, and market ASEAN as a hub for Cruise Tourism.

9. The Meeting acknowledged the completion of the cross-sectoral initiative between the Intellectual Property (IP) and Tourism sectors, culminating in the launch of the “Microsite on IP-Driven Tourism in ASEAN.” Supported by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), this platform highlights the intersection of tourism and creative and cultural industries, showcasing local Geographical Indication (GI) products and services as unique tourism offerings. The Meeting emphasised the importance of fostering innovation-driven tourism to differentiate ASEAN destinations and provide communities with greater economic opportunities.

10. The Meeting commended the success of the First Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Task Force on Tourism and Transport (1st ATFTT), which took place on the sidelines of the 58th ASEAN Senior Transport Official Meeting (STOM) on 20 November 2024, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Meeting agreed to focus on two concrete joint activities to be implemented over the next two years: a) an initiative to identify connectivity gaps in second-tier and third-tier tourism destinations in ASEAN, and b) the implementation of joint promotions between tourism and transport to enhance the number of International Visitor Arrivals and Air Passengers. These initiatives reflect ASEAN's commitment to enhancing regional connectivity and inclusivity in tourism, ensuring that benefits extend to under-represented destinations.

11. The Meeting was pleased to note the progress in the implementation of the ASEAN Ecotourism Standard for Activities, Facilities, and Services, which was adopted on 8 October 2024 via ad-referendum. The Meeting looked forward to strengthening the

capacity and quality of human resources involved in ecotourism initiatives. The Meeting acknowledged that the number of ASEAN MICE Venue Standard (AMVS) certified venues had reached 291, representing a 97% achievement of the goal outlined in the ATSP, which aimed for 300 certified venues across ASEAN by 2025. The Meeting further noted the progress development of the new ASEAN Sustainable Event Management Standard (ASEMS), with the first draft targeted for completion by 2025.

12. The Meeting further noted that during the ASEAN Tourism Standards Awards Ceremony held on 20 January 2025, 30 establishments in the region were honoured with the 5th ASEAN Homestay Award; 41 communities received the 4th ASEAN Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Award; 41 venues were recognised with the 3rd ASEAN Public Toilet Award; and 42 establishments were awarded the 3rd ASEAN Spa Services Award. The Meeting encouraged ASEAN Member States to further promote the ASEAN Tourism Standards within their respective countries to enhance the region's competitiveness.

Ensuring Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Development for All

13. The Meeting emphasised the critical importance of sustainable tourism as a driving force for economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation in ASEAN. Acknowledging the essential role of the private sector, the Meeting encouraged greater engagement and collaboration to implement innovative and sustainable practices. It also highlighted the importance of leveraging public-private partnerships (PPPs) to mobilise resources and expertise for initiatives aligned with the Action Roadmap for Sustainable Tourism Development in ASEAN.

14. The Meeting commended the completion of the updated ASEAN Crisis Communication Manual, which serves as a comprehensive guide designed to assist ASEAN NTOs and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in managing communications effectively during crises and emergencies, both within their own countries and across the region.

15. The Meeting reiterated ASEAN's commitment to fostering inclusive tourism development by ensuring that benefits are equitably shared across communities, particularly in rural and underserved areas. The Meeting encouraged the private sector to adopt socially responsible practices, such as creating employment opportunities for local communities and supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the tourism value chain.

Advancing Human Resources in the Tourism Sector

16. The Meeting agreed that human resource development is crucial for advancing cooperation in tourism toward sustainability, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the recovery of the tourism sector attracts a number of workers back to the industry. The Meeting urged ASEAN Member States to accelerate the implementation of the Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) through capacity-building training for Tourism Professionals, National Master Trainers, and

National Master Assessors, in line with the full operationalisation of the Regional Secretariat to implement the MRA-TP. The Meeting acknowledged and expressed satisfaction with the convening of the Meeting to revise the Guidelines for the Training of Master Trainers and Assessors of ASEAN MRA-TP Event Professionals which took place on 14 November 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand, and expressed anticipation for its endorsement by ASEAN Member States.

ASEAN Tourism Forum

17. The ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2025, held from 15-20 January 2025, in Johor, Malaysia, embraced the theme “Unity in Motion: Shaping ASEAN’s Tourism Tomorrow.” The forum attracted a diverse group of participants, including 323 buyers, 221 sellers, 221 exhibitors, and 100 media representatives from across the region and beyond. This gathering not only underscored the significant recovery of the tourism sector post-pandemic but also showcased the vast potential for growth and innovation within the industry. Attendees engaged in meaningful discussions and networking opportunities, fostering collaboration and partnerships aimed at enhancing tourism experiences in ASEAN. The event served as a platform to exchange ideas, best practices, and strategies that can drive the future of tourism in Southeast Asia, reflecting the region's resilience and commitment to sustainability.

18. The Meeting expressed appreciation for the support received from all stakeholders, including ASEANTA, ATRA, US-ABC, EU-ABC, ERIA, WTTC, PATA, UN Tourism, and Agoda, in further promoting tourism across various areas. Additionally, the meeting encouraged sub-regional organisations, such as IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA, to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat in identifying and implementing meaningful projects that support the ASEAN tourism agenda.

19. The Meeting noted that ATF 2026 would be held in January 2026 in Cebu, the Philippines.

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