



THE 24th MEETING OF ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS 4 February 2021

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The 24th Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers (24th M-ATM) was held on 4 February 2021 through video conference hosted by the Kingdom of Cambodia. H.E. Dr. Thong Khon, Minister of Tourism, Kingdom of Cambodia serves as the Chairman, and H.E. Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia, serves as the Vice-Chairman. The 24th M-ATM was preceded by the 53rd Meeting of ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and other Senior Official Meetings with Dialogue Partners.

2. The Ministers shared their deep concern over the impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak last year as tourism has been one of the hardest hit sectors. In 2020, ASEAN Member States preliminarily reported that compared to the same period in 2019, the tourism sector suffered a loss of approximately 75.8 per cent¹ in tourism receipts, international arrivals declined by approximately 80.5 per cent, the rate of hotel room occupancy was at its lowest, with the travel and tour industry also experiencing massive cancellations in 2020.

3. Despite the challenges posed in 2020, the Ministers commended tireless efforts by the ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and its Committees and Working Groups in coming up with mitigation and action plans to circumvent the impact, so as to continue implementing the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025. The Ministers commended the active role of the lead countries in implementing the strategic action programmes under the ATSP in creative and innovative ways by using digital technology to maintain the momentum of the tourism sector and enhance the competitiveness of ASEAN as a single tourism destination. In this regard, the Ministers endorsed the updated ATSP 2016-2025, which reflects the strategic direction of future cooperation in the tourism sector to be more resilient, sustainable and inclusive, taking into account lessons learnt from the pandemic and the latest developments in the tourism industry. The Ministers encouraged ASEAN NTOs and its subsidiary bodies to continue strengthening cooperation and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders including other ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, the private sector, and the community in order to contribute towards the realisation of the ASEAN integration goals by 2025.

On the Road to Recovery

4. The Ministers took note of the progress of the implementation of the key priorities in the Joint Statement of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers on Strengthening Cooperation to Revitalise ASEAN Tourism laid out by the Special Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers via Video Conference on 29 April 2020. The Ministers welcomed the Study on the Impact of COVID-19, and the Recommendations for Policies and Best Practices for the Post- COVID-

¹ Based on data submitted by 9 ASEAN Member States

19 Recovery Plan for ASEAN Tourism in December 2020, supported by the Government of Canada through the Canadian Trade and Investment Facility for Development (CTIF). The Ministers also supported the development of a Post- COVID-19 Recovery Plan, based on the Study, as one of the priority economic deliverables during Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN chairmanship year 2021. The Ministers noted the progress report of the Study and looked forward to receiving the final report with the recommendations and work plan in the first quarter of 2021.

5. The Ministers also took note that the ASEAN NTOs, with the support of the Australian Government through the Australia-ASEAN Development Cooperation Programme Phase 2, are developing guidelines on hygiene and safety for workers and communities in the tourism industry, to be concluded in 2021. The guidelines would further enhance public confidence and trust for the restart of tourism in the region.

6. As tourism is a sector that cuts across all ASEAN Community Pillars, the Ministers tasked the ASEAN NTOs to work closely with all the relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies to effectively and comprehensively implement recovery actions and programmes as well as harmonise policies and guidelines to collectively respond to COVID-19. In this regard, the Ministers also tasked the ASEAN NTOs to actively engage and contribute to the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan, which was adopted by the 37th ASEAN Summit in November 2020. The Ministers encouraged the ASEAN NTOs to collaborate with other relevant sectoral bodies under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Pillar in supporting the ASEAN's endeavours in achieving sustainable tourism development.

7. The Ministers also acknowledged the importance of expediting the operationalisation of the ASEAN Travel Corridor Arrangement Framework (ATCAF), as one of the programmes under the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework for the reopening phase. This is important in building ASEAN Member States' confidence to continue economic activities in the context of people's mobility, specifically for essential business travelers. Moreover, the operationalisation of the ATCAF would serve as a solid foundation for the expansion beyond essential business travelers, to include tourists, as long as the implementation of the ATCAF does not lead to an increase in the spread of COVID-19.

8. The Ministers emphasised the special focus on supporting tourism Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and promoting equal opportunities in order to enhance jobs for local communities, particularly for women, youth, native/indigenous peoples, minorities as well as vulnerable groups. The Ministers supported the activities and programmes to maintain human capital by reskilling and upskilling the employees who are working in tourism industry.

9. The Ministers welcomed the beginning of the vaccination programme in ASEAN Member States and encouraged all travelers to the ASEAN region and intra-ASEAN to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to ensure health and safety, promote trust, confidence, and resilience for a safe and responsible tourism recovery.

Gearing Towards ASEAN as a Single Tourism Destination

10. The Ministers took note of the progress of the implementation of the seven strategic action programmes under the updated ATSP 2016-2025 to ensure ASEAN's competitiveness as a single tourism destination. The Ministers welcomed the recommendations to reprioritise the implementation of the ATSP 2016-2025 following the

recent development and trends in the region. The identified new priority programmes include: (i) adoption of measures and initiatives to support the digitisation of ASEAN Tourism, (ii) strengthening the data and information network, and (iii) activities to promote connectivity and travel facilitation to and within the ASEAN.

11. The Ministers also welcomed the new ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy (ATMS) 2021-2025, which sets out the marketing roadmap for the next five years (2021-2025) and encouraged the relevant Committees and Working Group to work together in achieving the defined objectives, among others, to raise consideration amongst target segments and markets for Southeast Asia as a holiday destination by 10% by 2025². In this regard, the Ministers also encouraged ASEAN NTOs to strengthen collaboration with the private sector in promoting the tourism industry in the region.

12. The Ministers noted that the ASEAN Declaration on Digital Tourism has been adopted by the ASEAN Leaders at the 37th ASEAN Summit in November 2020. The Ministers tasked the ASEAN NTOs to implement the Declaration in line with the updated ATSP 2016-2025 with a view to fostering digital transformation in the tourism industry in ASEAN.

13. The Ministers acknowledged the potential in attracting tourists through numerous festivals in the region. The Ministers noted the progress on developing Festival Tours which highlight the various unique festivals and activities in ASEAN Member States. This information will be marketed through various channels.

14. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the ASEAN Cruise Work Plan 2020, particularly the outcomes of the cruise travel agents training webinar series held in October 2020 that equipped agents with information on enhanced safety and health protocols on cruise ships, and sales strategies to restore consumer confidence in cruising. Some 1,500 regional agents attended the training series. The Ministers noted that more market-specific training would be conducted and ASEAN Member States would encourage their local travel agents to participate in these sessions. The Ministers also acknowledged ASEAN's collaboration at the world's largest cruise trade show, Seatrade Cruise Global, which was held virtually in 2020, to collectively raise awareness of Southeast Asia within the cruise community.

15. The Ministers noted with satisfaction on the progress of the signing of the Protocol to Amend the Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP). The Protocol would facilitate and enhance the mobility of certified tourism professionals across and beyond the ASEAN region and increase competitiveness in the tourism sector. With the signing of the Protocol, the Ministers also looked forward to the inclusion of the ASEAN Competency Standards for Spa Professionals and the development of the curriculum and toolboxes for the Standards. The Ministers looked forward to the full ratification of the Protocol at the soonest.

16. The Ministers also noted the progress of the implementation of the ASEAN MRA-TP Work Plan 2019-2023 including the outcomes of the virtual Train the Trainers Workshop on the ASEAN Tourism Professional Registration System held on 30 September – 2 October 2020 and the progress of the work of MRA-TP Consultant, including the development of the Review Paper on the Strategy to Implement the Regional Secretariat. The Ministers looked forward to the completion of the development of curriculum and toolboxes for the ASEAN Competency Standards for MICE and Event Professionals, which cover 32 job titles.

² Brand Health Audit of 2017 shows that 35% of respondents would consider Southeast Asia as a holiday destination.

17. The Ministers acknowledged the importance of promoting investment so as to create jobs and contribute to ASEAN's economic growth. In this regard, the Ministers endorsed the ASEAN Tourism Investment Portfolio, which would further attract and facilitate international investors to invest in the ASEAN tourism sector. The Ministers encouraged all ASEAN Member States to continue participating in regional and international tourism investment events, including the ASEAN-China Tourism Investment Seminar that had been postponed to 2021.

18. With regard to the implementation of the Pakse Declaration on ASEAN Roadmap for Strategic Development of Ecotourism Clusters and Tourism Corridors, the Ministers welcomed the result of the study and recommended a five-year work plan to implement the Roadmap for the seven ecotourism clusters and tourism corridors, namely, (i) ASEAN Sea Cruise Tourism Corridor; (ii) Mekong North-South Tourism Cluster; (iii) Heart of Borneo Rainforest Ecotourism Cluster; (iv) Coral Triangle Marine Ecotourism Cluster; (v) Mekong/Irrawaddy River Tourism Corridor; (vi) ASEAN City Tourism Corridors (ASEAN Pass); and (vii) Rail Tourism Corridor. The Ministers encouraged ASEAN NTOs to work on the detailed activities in the Work Plan to implement the Pakse Declaration for 2021-2025.

Realising Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Tourism Development

19. The Ministers took note of the progress of the implementation of the three strategic action programmes to ensure that ASEAN tourism is sustainable and inclusive, namely in the following areas, (i) upgrade local communities and public-private sector participation in the tourism value chain; (ii) ensure safety and security, prioritise protection and management of heritage sites; and (iii) increase responsiveness to environmental protection and climate change. The Ministers were pleased to note the progress on the development of the regional action plan and tools to implement the "Strategy on Participation of Local Communities and Private Sector in Tourism Development". The Ministers encouraged the ASEAN Member States to actively engage their local stakeholders, including the private sector at the community level to contribute to the development of tourism in the region.

20. In further addressing the initiative on accessible tourism for all, the Ministers were pleased to note the development of a Directory for Universal Design City in ASEAN to promote accessible tourism. The directory will consist of the general information of each city, its facilitation for elder tourists and people with disabilities within hotels, transportation, restaurants and tourist attractions.

21. The Ministers also noted the outcomes of the two Special Video Conferences of the ASEAN Tourism Crisis Communication Team on COVID-19 held on 4 June 2020 and 26 August 2020, among others, to have updated information regarding Travel Restrictions and Quarantine Information available on a COVID-19 dedicated page on the ASEAN Tourism website. The website would support the coordination efforts by tourism agencies to regain the trust and confidence of international travelers to revitalise the tourism industry in the region as soon as possible.

22. With regard to the contribution of the tourism sector to the protection and preservation of ASEAN heritage sites and heritage parks, the Ministers were pleased to note the development of the project "Achieving Sustainable Tourism with Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding and Creative City Promotion in Waterway Cities of Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand" with the aim to

enhance the sub-regional capacity to efficiently implement an ASEAN sustainable tourism roadmap, enabling both public and private sectors to connect better with local communities while generating economic and social benefits in the long term.

23. The Ministers also acknowledged the importance of pursuing activities related to supporting community-based tourism development with particular emphasis on greening the tourism value chain to further enhance sustainability and resilience of destinations in ASEAN. This activity is likewise incorporated as a new action programme on the updated ATSP 2016-2025.

24. The Ministers adopted the Phnom Penh Declaration on a More Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient ASEAN Tourism. The Ministers tasked the ASEAN NTOs to develop work programmes for its implementation to foster the ASEAN Tourism Recovery and a more resilient future.

Chairmanship and ASEAN Tourism Forum

25. Due to the unprecedented circumstances, the Ministers agreed to extend the chairmanship of Cambodia to January 2022 in order to enable Cambodia to host the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) in 2022.

LIST OF MINISTERS

The Meeting was attended by:

- (i) H.E. Dato Ali Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, Brunei Darussalam;
- (ii) H.E. Dr. Thong Khon, Minister of Tourism, Cambodia;
- (iii) H.E. Mr. Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia;
- (iv) H.E. Mr. Ounethouang Khaophanh, Vice-Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR;
- (v) H.E. Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia;
- (vi) H.E. Mr. Maung Maung Kyaw, Director General, representing Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar;
- (vii) H.E. Mdm. Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, Secretary of Tourism, Philippines;
- (viii) H.E. Mr. Alvin Tan, Minister of State, Ministry of Trade & Industry and Ministry of Community, Culture & Youth, Singapore;
- (ix) H.E. Mr. Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn, Minister of Tourism and Sports, Thailand;
- (x) H.E. Mr. Nguyen Trung Khanh, Chairman, Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism, representing H.E. Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Thien, Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Viet Nam; and
- (xi) H.E. Dato' Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN.
