



**THE 26th MEETING OF ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS
4 February 2023, Yogyakarta, Indonesia**

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

1. The 26th Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers (26th M-ATM) was held on 4 February 2023 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. H.E. Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia, chaired the Meeting and H.E. Mrs. Suanesavanh Vignaket, Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR, was the Vice-Chairperson. The 26th M-ATM was preceded by the 57th Meeting of the ASEAN National Tourism Organisations and other Senior Official Meetings with Dialogue Partners.

2. With the theme of "ASEAN: A Journey to Wonderful Destinations", the Meeting focused its discussion on the progress of the activities under the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025. The Meeting commended the work of the ASEAN National Tourism Organisations in ensuring that the agreed activities in 2022 were implemented accordingly, and encouraged the ASEAN National Tourism Organisations to identify strategic measures and activities to enhance the implementation of the ATSP in the years to come.

3. The Meeting commended the further relaxation and removal of travel restrictions by ASEAN Member States following the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2022 held in Preah Sihanouk province, Cambodia. The Meeting noted that based on the preliminary figures of 2022, ASEAN saw a 1,706.61% year-on-year increase in tourism receipts. ASEAN also recorded a 1,222.99% year-on-year increase in international arrivals with the relaxation of ASEAN Member States' travel restrictions. Hotel rate occupancy also increased by 16% compared to that in 2021.

A More Innovative and Competitive ASEAN Tourism

4. The Meeting commended the relentless effort put in to promote ASEAN as a preferred destination by restoring confidence among tourists visiting the region, showcasing the rich diversity and endless possibilities; and capturing the warmth, resilience, and sense of fun and adventure that are emblematic of the ASEAN region and people.

5. The Meeting was pleased to note the positive results from the ongoing marketing activities, such as the well curated social media content, digital campaigns, and the extensive use of the new brand and tagline "A Destination for Every Dream" through relevant activities, as well as the article published on the World Tourism Day 2022 which highlighted Forbes' report on the 50 most beautiful countries, in which five ASEAN countries were listed.

6. The Meeting further emphasised the need to enhance collaboration with relevant partners to amplify ongoing marketing efforts. On this note, the Meeting commended a number of initiatives that have received support from external partners such as the Intra-ASEAN Tourism Recovery Campaign (which received support from the Canadian Trade and Investment Facility for Development), as well as ASEAN's collaboration with TTG Asia and the Sub-Regional Secretariats (BIMP-EAGA, IMT-GT, and Greater Mekong Subregion) to amplify the call to visit Southeast Asia.

7. The Meeting commended the effort and commitment by ASEAN Member States in implementing the key measures under the Post-COVID-19 Recovery Plan for ASEAN Tourism to ensure that the tourism sector revives as soon as possible. The Meeting noted that 60% of the identified 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 continue implementing and reviewing their priority activities under the Recovery Plan in order to ensure that the priorities are aligned with the ATSP. The Meeting noted the implementation plan of the ASEAN Guidelines on Hygiene and Safety for Tourism Professionals and the Community in the Tourism Industry and supported the development of the ASEAN Safe Travel Stamp certification as a useful guide for the tourism sector.

8. The Meeting noted the importance of Cruise Tourism as one of the sectors which will kickstart tourism recovery. On this note, the Meeting supported the activities in the Cruise Tourism Work Plan 2023, which includes the joint ASEAN marketing initiatives at the annual Seatrade Cruise Global (SCG) in Miami, United States, as one of the world's largest cruise trade shows, to collectively raise awareness of Southeast Asia destinations within the global cruise community.

9. The Meeting highlighted another initiative identified in the Recovery Plan, which launched a programme to promote 'new and less explored' destinations within the region. Through this initiative, a number of destinations and offerings that would benefit from greater exposure were identified. The Meeting noted the progress implementation of this initiative with the aim to promote specially curated tourism packages on appropriate platforms to further enhance the visibility of ASEAN destinations.

10. The Meeting further noted that during the ASEAN Tourism Standards Awards Ceremony held on 5 February 2023 in Yogyakarta, 43 homestay establishments in the region were honoured with the 4th ASEAN Homestay Award, 29 entities were honoured with the 3rd ASEAN Community Based Tourism (CBT) Award, 38 establishments were honoured with the 2nd ASEAN Spa Services Awards, and 48 establishments were honoured with the 2nd ASEAN Public Toilet Award. The Meeting encouraged ASEAN Member States to further promote the ASEAN Tourism Standards within their respective countries to increase the region's competitiveness.

Enhanced Capability Building of ASEAN Tourism Professionals

11. The Meeting noted that the Protocol to Amend the Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) was adopted on 24 June 2022 by

ad referendum and that ASEAN Member States are currently processing the ratification of the Protocol internally. The Protocol will enable the implementation of new job titles of the Meeting, Incentive, Conference and Exhibition (MICE) Professionals, Event Professionals and the Spa Professionals in the Appendix of the MRA-TP. The Meeting endorsed the Final Competency Standards and Toolboxes for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) Professionals and Final Competency Standards and Toolboxes for Event Professionals. The Meeting also endorsed the Final Updated Packaging Rules for Hotel Services and Travel Services as part of the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP).

12. The Meeting also noted the completion of the Comprehensive Study on the Implementation of the MRA-TP: Enhanced Mechanism for Tourism Professionals by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) in November 2022 and encouraged the ASEAN Member States to review the recommendations raised in the Study.

Enhancing Responsible, Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Development

13. The Meeting commended the work related to the Study to Develop a Framework on Sustainable Tourism Development in ASEAN in the Post COVID-19 Era, with the support by ERIA, which was endorsed by the ASEAN Tourism Ministers and included as one of the Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs) under the ASEAN Tourism Chairmanship in 2022. The Meeting encouraged the ASEAN National Tourism Organisations to review the framework and deliberate on the recommendations, so as to identify priorities in this Framework to guide the industry towards a more sustainable tourism pathway. The Meeting noted that this would support the implementation of the Phnom Penh Declaration on a More Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient ASEAN Tourism.

14. The Meeting reiterated the urgency to activate the Action Plan to guide relevant stakeholders in implementing the identified priorities in this Framework, and highlighted that the development of the Action Plan would require cross-sectoral collaboration as emphasised in the Study, as well as Capacity Building Programmes to familiarise relevant stakeholders in the region. In this regard, the Meeting noted the successful implementation of the Sustainable Practices on Hotel Waste Management for ASEAN Tourism Industry Workshop held in Langkawi, Malaysia in October 2022, as one of the efforts to promote sustainable and responsible tourism in ASEAN.

15. The Meeting was pleased to note that the Phnom Penh Declaration on Transforming ASEAN Tourism was adopted by the ASEAN Leaders at the ASEAN Summit in November 2022. As such, the Meeting encouraged ASEAN Member States to align the implementation of this initiative with the Framework on Sustainable Tourism Development with the aim to reinforce regional efforts in restoring and building confidence for travel resumption, as well as to promote a more sustainable and inclusive ASEAN Tourism.

16. The Meeting recalled the Pakse Declaration on ASEAN Roadmap for Strategic Development of Ecotourism Clusters and Tourism Corridors and encouraged ASEAN to develop a network of tourism corridors to enable tourists to visit the region's rich

ecotourism sites, especially its nature reserves, to experience the essence of ASEAN's nature-based products and services, and to implement concerted actions for the balanced sustainable development of ecotourism, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

17. To support the development of the ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality that was jointly initiated by ASEAN Economic Ministers, ASEAN Agriculture and Forestry Ministers, ASEAN Energy Ministers, and ASEAN Transport Ministers, the Meeting appreciated the effort by stakeholders and tourist operators, who are already identifying and implementing activities, projects and programmes to accelerate the decarbonisation of tourism operations.

Driving Greater Digital Tourism Adoption and Transformation

18. The Meeting recalled the ASEAN Declaration on Digital Tourism which underscores the importance of digital technology to the future resilience and sustainability of the tourism sector. In view of this, the Meeting urged ASEAN Member States to fast-track region-wide tourism digital skills training in collaboration with established ASEAN programmes as well as the private sector, so as to better identify the relevant skills required in the post-pandemic era.

19. The Meeting further deliberated on the vital role of technology to support sustainability efforts in tourism destinations, as the long-term resilience of ASEAN's tourism sector is closely linked to environmental and social sustainability. In this regard, the implementation of technological solutions (i.e. for reducing energy, water consumption, and food waste) should be explored for better decision-making processes to realise the vision of Sustainable Tourism in ASEAN.

20. To this end, the Meeting encouraged all relevant stakeholders to work with the ASEAN Secretariat to identify and implement activities, projects, and programmes on the above-mentioned priorities in the ASEAN region to achieve sustainable and inclusive development in the tourism sector.

ASEAN Tourism Forum

21. The ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2023 was held from 2-5 February 2023 in Yogyakarta with the theme of "ASEAN: A Journey to Wonderful Destinations". 64 international sellers and exhibitors, 54 buyers, and 74 domestic and international media attended the ATF 2023. The Meeting expressed their appreciation to CNN International as the official media partner of ATF 2023.

22. The Meeting noted that ATF 2024 would be held from 15-20 January 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR, with the theme of Quality and Responsible Tourism – Sustaining ASEAN Future.
