

2020 JOINT STATEMENT OF THE ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS ON STRENGTHENING COOPERATION TO REVITALISE ASEAN TOURISM

Adopted on 29 April 2020

WE, the Tourism Ministers of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), have convened the Special Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on 29 April 2020;

EXPRESS our deep concern over the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic outbreak, which had severely impacted the health, well-being, and safety of our ASEAN Community; and it continues to pose imminent and unprecedented threats to regional and global economic growth and social development;

EXTEND our deepest sympathies to the people and families in ASEAN Member States and international community that have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak;

COMMEND the tireless efforts and leadership of the ASEAN Health sector together with the World Health Organization (WHO), international organisations and ASEAN's partners, in controlling the spread of the virus and strengthening a coordinated mechanism to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in the region, and ensuring the well-being of the medical professionals, healthcare workers, and other frontline personnel;

RECALL the ASEAN Chairman's Statement on ASEAN Collective Response to the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019, which underlined the "importance of ASEAN solidarity and the spirit of a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community in facing the outbreak of COVID-19 and similar challenges";

ACKNOWLEDGE the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) Chairman's Press Statement on COVID-19 issued on 20 February 2020 in Vientiane, Lao PDR, which reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to maintaining open economic and integration policies and fostering regional resilience, while being prepared to explore cooperation with ASEAN's external partners and international community to enhance readiness and response measures to mitigate and eliminate the impact of COVID-19;

ACKNOWLEDGE the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and WHO joint recommendations released on 26 February 2020, covering three key areas, namely, Managing the Crisis and Mitigating the Impact, Providing Stimulus and Accelerating Recovery, and Preparing for Tomorrow;

REAFFIRM the Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) issued on 14 April 2020 which conveyed ASEAN's commitment to take collective actions and coordinated policies to mitigate the economic and social impact from the pandemic, safeguard the people's well-being, and maintain socio-economic stability;

STRONGLY SUPPORT the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Statement on Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) issued on 10 March 2020 at the 26th AEM Retreat, which resolves to take a collective course of action to mitigate the economic impact of the outbreak of COVID-19;

RECOGNISE the urgent need for a strengthened ASEAN coordination mechanism to collectively overcome surging challenges to the tourism sector, one of the worst hit economic sectors in the pandemic, where travel and tourism businesses have grounded to a halt, leading to high unemployment and furlough rates, and adversely affecting the livelihood of many communities in our midst; and

ENCOURAGED BY the ASEAN Member States' efforts individually and collectively implemented through various ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial Bodies in all three ASEAN Community Pillars in taking a united effort to mitigate the impact of the outbreak;

HEREBY AGREE to:

1. Foster ASEAN coordination in expediting information exchange on travel related health and other necessary measures undertaken by ASEAN Member States to control the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak through the enhanced operation of the ASEAN Tourism Crisis Communication Team (ATCCT), with a view to providing timely and reliable information for inbound and outbound travelers and tourism operators throughout this region;
2. Intensify ASEAN's National Tourism Organisations' (NTOs) collaboration with other relevant ASEAN sectors, especially in health, information, transport and immigration, as well as with ASEAN's external partners, relevant international organisations and the international community, to jointly implement measures and build on each other's platforms to promote a comprehensive, transparent and early response to mitigate and alleviate the impact of COVID-19 and future crises;
3. Enhance closer cooperation in the sharing of information and exchange of best practices among ASEAN Member States as well as with ASEAN Dialogue Partners on the responses to the crisis, communications readiness, connectivity coordination, national relief efforts and measures to support the tourism sector, as well as capture key learnings in a post-crisis review report for ASEAN Member States' reference to better manage future pandemics or crisis;
4. Implement clear policies and measures to bolster confidence among domestic and international visitors to Southeast Asia, including the development of clear standards and guidelines for a safer and healthier work environment to protect our workers and communities in the hospitality and tourism-related industries, destinations and establishments in ASEAN Member States;
5. Support the development and implementation of a post COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Plan without undermining efforts to safeguard public health, which includes, but not limited to, building up ASEAN tourism capabilities, engaging with industry stakeholders to instill business and consumer confidence, exploring creative and innovative solutions to stimulate the tourism sector especially through the use of digital technologies, ensuring top of mind recall of the region in our marketing efforts and joint tourism promotion programmes with the goal to advance ASEAN as a single tourism destination;
6. Expedite both micro- and macro-economic policies, among others, providing technical support and financial stimulus, tax alleviation, capacity and capability building, especially digital skills, for travel and tourism stakeholders, with special emphasis on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), vulnerable groups and other affected communities; and
7. Pursue cooperation with ASEAN Dialogue Partners, relevant international organisations and industry stakeholders to build a resilient and prepared Southeast Asia to effectively implement and manage sustainable and inclusive tourism in the aftermath of a crisis.