

2021 PHNOM PENH DECLARATION ON A MORE SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT ASEAN TOURISM

Adopted on 4 February 2021

WE, the Tourism Ministers of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (hereinafter referred to as “ASEAN”), namely, Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, have gathered on 4 February 2021 for the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers;

REAFFIRMING our commitment to realise the vision for ASEAN to be a quality tourism destination offering a unique, diverse Southeast Asian experience, and to be a responsible, sustainable, inclusive and balanced tourism development, so as to contribute significantly to the socio-economic well-being of ASEAN people by 2025 as inscribed in the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025;

RECOGNISING that tourism is one of the significant contributors to economic growth in ASEAN, providing major economic returns and social benefits, contributing considerably to Gross Domestic Product; being a significant employment generator, and accounting for an important share of global trade in goods and services;

APPRECIATING the importance of strengthening regional and international cooperation to safely restart and rebuild ASEAN tourism especially in view of its role as one of the drivers for social transformation and achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals;

RECOGNISING that tourism is one of the hardest-hit sectors by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which has negatively impacted people’s livelihoods across the Southeast Asian region;

AFFIRMING the Joint Statement of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers on Strengthening Cooperation to Revitalise ASEAN Tourism issued on 29 April 2020, which agreed to, among others, support the development and implementation of a post COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Plan without undermining efforts to safeguard public health, including exploring creative and innovative solutions to stimulate the tourism sector especially through the use of digital technologies;

ACKNOWLEDGING the Pakse Declaration on ASEAN Roadmap for Strategic Development of Ecotourism Clusters and Tourism Corridors adopted on 22 June 2016, which, among others, encouraged concerted action for the balanced and sustainable development of ecotourism;

RECALLING the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan and the ASEAN Declaration on Digital Tourism adopted at the 37th ASEAN Summit on 12 November 2020, which, *inter alia*, provides a coordinated and consolidated exit strategy for ASEAN to emerge resilient and strong from the COVID-19 crisis, and emphasised the need to apply digital technology and innovation to tourism development to enhance competitiveness, facilitate growth, and develop sustainable tourism; and

EMPHASISING the need to enhance destination competitiveness and to ensure a more sustainable, inclusive as well as resilient ASEAN tourism sector in response to the new dynamics arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

DO HEREBY ENDEAVOUR TO:

1. **ENCOURAGE** closer collaboration between ASEAN Member States as well as with relevant international organisations and tourism stakeholders to achieve a sustainable, inclusive and resilient ASEAN Tourism sector for greater socio-economic growth while safeguarding the diverse cultures and rich biodiversity in the region;
2. **STRENGTHEN** regional efforts to revitalise and build a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient ASEAN tourism through the expeditious development of a Post COVID-19 Recovery Plan for ASEAN Tourism, and taking into account best international practices, local response and recovery policies, and the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic to better respond to changing global tourism trends;
3. **PROMOTE** the development of sustainable, responsible and inclusive tourism to ensure fair and equal employment and development opportunities, with special emphasis on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), vulnerable groups and other affected communities; and
4. **ENHANCE** capacity building by providing better access to up-skilling and re-skilling training courses, educational exchange programmes and regional research networks for tourism professionals in areas such as digital technologies, innovation, ecotourism and entrepreneurship, which will contribute to greater talent development and empowerment, as well as diversified markets and product offerings.

ADOPTED at the Twenty Fourth Meeting of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers, this Fourth day of February in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-One, in a single original copy, in the English language.