

ASEAN Integration And Its Impact On Tourism

A Technical Paper Prepared for the UNWTO Member States belonging to ASEAN

“The primary goal of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint is to contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-centred and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN by forging a common identity and building a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced.”

-- *BLUEPRINT FOR THE ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY (2009-2015),
adopted by the 14th ASEAN summit, Hua Hin/Cha-am, Thailand, February 2009*

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WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DU TOURISME
ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL DEL TURISMO
ВСЕМИРНАЯ ТУРИСТСКАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ
منظمة السياحة العالمية

**Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific
World Tourism Organization**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ever since it burst on the world stage with the historic 1992 Visit ASEAN Year, commemorating the 25th year of the founding of the Association, the ASEAN travel & tourism industry has been through some rough patches, including both internal and external shocks.

Now in its 42nd year, the wider ASEAN community is beginning to get its act together with a broad range of political, economic and socio-cultural agreements, and numerous initiatives with external partners such as China, India, Japan, Korea, the Gulf Countries and Mercosur.

These will have a profound influence on the ASEAN as a whole, and the ASEAN travel & tourism industry in particular, for decades ahead.

As the ASEAN travel & tourism industry prepares the draft of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (2011-15), it will have to factor in a whole new set of parameters, including a) changes in the global world order; b) future directions of ASEAN; and c) expected changes in the ASEAN travel & tourism industry itself.

While the first phase of tourism growth over the last three decades was driven by the need to create infrastructure and eliminate impediments and bottlenecks, the new era will require the ASEAN travel & tourism industry to build the super-structure without compromising its environmental, cultural and social fabric.

The mandate for doing this has been set in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, the first of its kind approved by the ASEAN leaders at the 14th ASEAN summit in Thailand in February 2009. The Blueprint includes a detailed and exhaustive wish-list of what the ASEAN leaders would like to see done in the years ahead to forge “a common identity and build a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced.”

This report includes a selection of items from that socio-cultural wish-list that have clear and direct relevance to the future of ASEAN travel & tourism. It also includes a number of recommendations for building on these plans in a way that will a) help build a stronger ASEAN Identity; b) help better Integrate ASEAN travel & tourism into the future of ASEAN as a whole.

This will allow ASEAN tourism to become arguably the only one of the many ASEAN economic sectors that can contribute in a balanced and equitable way to both the generation and management of growth.

That message will certainly resonate well with the ASEAN leadership.

INTRODUCTION

The 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is moving rapidly forward on a platform of change that focuses on Two I's (Integration and Identity). The road ahead requires it to "Think Global, Plan Regional, Act Local." This opens a unique window of opportunity to launch an entirely new era of tourism development that will allow ASEAN travel & tourism to reclaim its erstwhile leadership role as the only industry capable of driving growth in an economically-productive, environmentally-friendly, culturally-respectful and socially-friendly way.

At the same time, a unique opportunity has presented itself for the UN World Tourism Organisation to be an intrinsic and influential part of this change process, and do it in a way that can be replicated as a business model in other parts of the world.

At the macro level, the three tributaries of change are now merging into one large river of water:

New World Order: The global shift in the balance of power is now widely acknowledged. The vast majority of the world's population is in the Asia Pacific. The rise of China and India will have a profound impact on global geopolitics and the international economy. There is a move towards generating more South-South trade. Technologies are also changing, as are consumer lifestyles.

ASEAN Rising: Now in its 42nd year, and a strategically located and populous part of the world, ASEAN is entering middle-age, with a new mandate for the future. The new rallying mission statement is to create "One Vision, One Identity and One Sharing and Caring Community." The former battlefields of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are now well-integrated into the ASEAN community. The economic crisis of 1997 and the more recent global financial and economic crisis has led to serious soul-searching about the need to learn from the mistakes of the past, become more self-reliant and self-sufficient, and better integrate the region's people in pursuit of a common identity. Indeed, the future focus is on raising "software" development to the same level as the past focus on "hardware."

A New Era For ASEAN Travel & Tourism: The ASEAN travel & tourism industry was once the region's most high-profile industry, very much at the forefront of the pursuing the same socio-economic and cultural objectives that ASEAN is more

robustly pursuing today. With economic growth, easier facilitation and improvements in the regional transportation infrastructure, the ability to move people, products and services is now well on track. This means that generating growth is no longer an issue, managing the growth is. Hence, here too, the future focus is shifting to “software” in tandem with “hardware.”

PART ONE

Brief background and history of ASEAN tourism

It was in the late 1980s that travel & tourism began to gain widespread recognition for its critical role as a catalyst for ASEAN economic development and socio-cultural integration. Struggling to establish its presence in the world, and seen largely as a political bloc in the aftermath of the Indochina wars, ASEAN had only five members, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia. In January 1994, Brunei Darussalam joined ASEAN, followed by Vietnam in July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar in July 1997, and Cambodia in April 1999.

As of 2008, the ASEAN region had a population of about 584million, a total area of 4.4 million square kilometres, a combined gross domestic product of almost US\$ 1,106 billion, and a total trade of about US\$ 1,710 billion.

The original five member countries were more or less at the same stage of economic development. Their history, heritage and other commonalities such as high service standards, good value for money, relatively relaxed visa facilities and excellent products bound them together in pursuing robust tourism development policies.

In 1987, Thailand initiated its landmark event Visit Thailand Year to celebrate the 60th birthday of King Bhumibhol Adulyadej. The phenomenal success of the event led to its ASEAN neighbours in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Philippines, following suit with similar events, culminating eventually in a Visit ASEAN Year 1992, which marked the 25th anniversary of the founding of ASEAN.

These events clearly demonstrated the power of travel & tourism to attract visitors, raise foreign exchange earnings and create jobs. They provided the catalyst for the entire industry to single-mindedly get together under one banner, leading to unprecedented levels of budgetary promotions and industry cooperation.

The success of these events attracted investors, both local and foreign. A new range of products and services emerged, leading to a massive creation of capacity and inventory which required strong marketing efforts.

The formation of the ASEAN Tourism Information Centre (ATIC), based in Kuala Lumpur, helped drive tourism by providing strong direction and infrastructure support, with requisite funding.

Many of the tourism leaders of that generation were close personal friends. At least two of them were confidantes of the leaders of their respective countries at the time, thus facilitating budget approvals and quick decision-making. Indonesia was one of the fastest growing destinations.

The entrance of Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos broadened the appeal of ASEAN as they began emphasising travel & tourism as part of their quick-recovery economic development programmes in the aftermath of the Indochina wars.

Trade shows like the ASEAN Tourism Forum became a major fixture on the annual calendar of events. Each of the new ASEAN members, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, has held one. The only exception so far is Myanmar.

Competition between Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok as aviation hubs of Asia helped attract more airline traffic. The individual promotions of each ASEAN country were strongly supported by the respective national airlines. The emergence of new airlines and the restructuring of old ones attracted more travel to the region.

This competitive fervour extended to the ASEAN resorts, for example between Bali and Phuket, and emerging island resorts like Cebu, Penang and Samui.

The establishment of sub-regional groups such as IMT-GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle) and BIMP-EAGA (Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area), amongst others, further stimulated markets, especially intra-regional tourism.

Today, all these efforts have clearly produced results.

- In 2008, ASEAN tourist arrivals totalled 65.47 million, up 5.11% over 62.28 million in 2007, and a significant overall increase since Cambodia became the last member to join in 1998. In 2000, for example, tourist arrivals into the region totalled 39 million.
- Intra-ASEAN travel has become a major driver of growth. In 2008, it comprised 46% of total arrivals, up from 41% of total arrivals in 2000.
- Of the Top Ten source markets for the ASEAN countries in 2008, four are ASEAN countries (Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand).

- International tourism receipts for the region have also surged from US\$16.98 billion dollars to US\$54.6 billion dollars in 2008.

Further statistical details are in the attachment: [Annex 1 ASEAN Statistical Info.](#)

Decline of ASEAN Tourism Promotion As A Single Destination

Today, ASEAN travel & tourism is becoming a classic contradiction in terms of “synergy” being no requisite for growth. It is doing well thanks to the individual efforts of its many public and private sector players, including national tourism organisations, state and city governments, airlines, airports, convention bureaus, hotel chains, etc.

While the original momentum, funding and direction was set collectively by the ASEAN NTOs between 1987-96, it is now being pushed forward by individual and sub-regional entities.

Since the 1997 economic crisis, the promotion of ASEAN as a single destination has lost momentum. This has happened in spite of the signing of an ASEAN Tourism Agreement in 2002, and can be traced back to a number of reasons:

- The closure of ATIC in 1996 and the transfer of all tourism coordination activities to the ASEAN secretariat affected the industry in terms of leadership and support facilities for conducting joint marketing and strategic planning exercises. Some key aspects of cooperation in marketing, research, information dissemination and training were transferred to the ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA). The tourism activities of the public sector were centralised at the ASEAN headquarters in Jakarta where tourism became a small part of the many other economic sectors under the ASEAN umbrella.
- Funding and decision-making structures had to adapt to the new realities and the new member countries. Equal treatment is now the rule in funding and decisions have to be reached by consensus. Thus, finances are short, with no capacity to initiate any marketing campaigns or do strategic research.
- The numerous crises since the 1997 crash, along with internal geopolitical disturbances and natural disasters, all had an impact on tourism. The frequency and scale of these “external shocks” caught the industry off guard in more ways than one, and exposed how ill prepared it was to handle them.

Regional and Global Factors That Will Lead ASEAN Travel & Tourism to Grow

Even as the collective efforts to promote ASEAN as a single destination become far less significant in terms of influence and importance, a host of political, economic, cultural, demographic and other such factors, as well as infrastructure developments, will drive tourism to, from and within ASEAN in future.

Indeed, it can be safely said that competition amongst the ASEAN countries has become a far more important factor than cooperation in driving and generating growth. Here is a brief roundup of the strong “fundamentals” that will drive future growth.

- Cumulatively, the 10 member countries have a population of nearly 600 million, with rising economic prosperity and a growing middle class.
- They boast a rich inventory of tourism assets, including both natural and man-made attractions.
- There is more than enough capacity in terms of hotel rooms, airline seats, convention centres, etc., some of which are considered the best in the world.
- They have extremely competitive national tourism organisations, with large marketing budgets.
- The populous countries of India and China will be major generators of business, overtaking the long-standing front-runners of Japan and Korea.
- Low cost airlines are continuing to provide a significant impetus to intra-ASEAN travel.
- The emergence of the Trans Asian highway and Trans-Asian railway will further boost transportation linkages.
- Relaxation of border-control formalities will mean greater movement of people and goods over land border crossings.
- Demographic trends such as the ageing societies in the industrialised countries and young societies in ASEAN and the rest of the world will ensure no shortage of numbers.
- Technology is galloping in leaps and bounds – more internet penetration will boost social networking and other such connectivity.

Threats and challenges

But recent developments have also indicated that it may not all be smooth sailing. Natural disasters and health warnings will continue to pose standing risks. The impact of climate change is only just beginning to make itself felt. And the region's cultural, social and ethnic diversity, certainly its major tourism asset, could also be a significant future liability.

PART TWO

Key Decisions and Directions of the ASEAN Community

The travel & tourism industry will be a primary beneficiary of the wider agenda to promote social, economic and political cohesiveness within the ASEAN region.

At the 14th ASEAN summit in Thailand, hailed as a landmark in the history of ASEAN, a number of agreements were signed, adopted and endorsed to take the region into a new era based on the new realities and accommodate the next generation of growth. The mission statement is to create an ASEAN Community that is “politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible,” narrow the development gap within and between the member countries, and make the region more resilient to external shocks, such as financial crises and spiralling oil and food prices.

Amidst the backdrop of the current global economic turmoil, the ASEAN leaders have decided that their best strategy is to stay focused on economic integration, on regional cooperation and on wider ASEAN Community building.

ASEAN Charter

The drive to “realise an ASEAN Community that is politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible” is now embodied in the ASEAN Charter which came into force on 15 December 2008. A Report of the Eminent Persons Group, in January 2007, said: “An ASEAN Charter (...) presents an opportunity for ASEAN to take stock of its achievements and shortcomings, reaffirm ASEAN's relevance, and forge a new path for ASEAN integration.”

Patterned along the lines of a regional constitution, its two basic principles are the promotion of democracy and human rights. It provides the legal and institutional framework for ASEAN to be a more “rules-based, effective and people-oriented organisation” and also envisages the establishment of dispute settlement mechanisms.

After having been endorsed by the ASEAN leaders, the next step is the establishment of ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights, the first of its kind. The human rights body is designed to implement the Charter both in letter and in

spirit. A committee of Permanent Representatives will be set up at the ASEAN secretariat in Jakarta.

Roadmap for an ASEAN Community (2009-2015)

On 7 October 2003, the ASEAN leaders at their summit in Bali, Indonesia, agreed to establish an ASEAN Community by 2020. This was agreed to comprise of three pillars, namely 1) Political And Security Community, 2) Economic Community, and 3) Socio-Cultural Community. All three pillars were designated to be “closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing for the purpose of ensuring durable peace, stability, and shared prosperity in the region.”

On 13 January 2007, at the ASEAN Summit in Cebu, the leaders agreed to advance the establishment date of the ASEAN Community to 2015. That was followed up at the 14th ASEAN Summit in Cha-am/Hua Hin when the Declaration on the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015 was approved. In that declaration, the leaders “reiterated our commitment to promote greater participation by our people in the ASEAN community-building process.”

“Greater participation” is a reference to the desire to expand the scope of the ASEAN decision-making process to include media, youth, civil society and parliamentary organisations. The Roadmap, together with the following three ASEAN Community Blueprints, will help move forward the community-building process in a more balanced, inclusive and sustainable manner.

In principle, this is what the “three pillars” of the ASEAN community are designed to achieve:

◇ **The ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint**, envisages ASEAN to be a rules-based Community of shared values and norms in a just, democratic and harmonious environment; a cohesive, peaceful, stable and resilient region with shared responsibility for comprehensive security; as well as a dynamic and outward-looking region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world.

◇ **The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint** will serve as a monitoring mechanism to identify specific actions that must be undertaken by ASEAN collectively or by ASEAN Member States individually in implementing the AEC Blueprint. It incorporates a number of other agreements such as the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), Comprehensive Investment Agreement, the Sectoral Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Inspection of Manufacturers of Medicinal Products. These agreements contain a number of key features to enhance transparency, certainty and predictability in the ASEAN legal framework and enhance ASEAN's rules-based system, which is of importance to the ASEAN business community and consumers.

◇ **The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint** will help realise an ASEAN Community that is “people-centred and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN by forging a common identity and building a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced.” The Inaugural Meeting of the ASCC Council is to be held on 23-24 August 2009 in Bangkok.

PROTECTION AGAINST EXTERNAL SHOCKS

In order to reduce the impacts of external shocks such as the global economic and financial crisis on trade, investment and socio-economic development in ASEAN, the leaders have agreed on measures to boost macroeconomic policy coordination, stand firm against protectionism, implement the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint, and intensify efforts for a strong Doha Development Agenda outcome.

ASEAN and its “Plus Three Partners” (Japan, Korea and China) have agreed to strengthen the regional self-help financial mechanism through the establishment of a regional pooling reserve arrangement with the total fund of USD 120 billion. Finance Ministers have also agreed to develop a regional surveillance mechanism to monitor and analyse regional economies and support the (Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation) CMIM decision-making.

ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA)

The AFTA will cover tourism and transport as well as the following sectors: Food, Agriculture & Forestry; Telecommunications and IT; Finance; Intellectual Property; Investment; Minerals & Energy; Services; and SMEs. Now virtually established, AFTA will see a significant lowering of intra-regional tariffs through the Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) Scheme for AFTA.

More than 99 percent of the products in the CEPT Inclusion List (IL) of ASEAN-6, comprising of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, have been brought down to the 0-5 percent tariff range. ASEAN's newer members, namely Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam, are not far behind in the implementation of their CEPT commitments with almost 80 percent of their products having been moved into their respective CEPT ILS. Of these items, about 66 percent already have tariffs within the 0-5 percent tariff band. All the countries are expected to bring down tariff of products in the Inclusion List to no more than 5 percent duties by 2010.

Subregional Groups

In addition to the cooperative arrangements at the ASEAN level, significant progress on integration is being achieved at the sub-regional level on issues such as transportation, sustainable development and water resource management.

Such subregional cooperation frameworks including the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT), and the inter-state areas along the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) among Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and North-eastern Thailand, and Myanmar, the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation Scheme, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam (CLV) Development Triangle, the Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand (CLT) Emerald Triangle, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV).

External Relations

Various levels of economic, social and cultural cooperation to enhance ASEAN's resilience, competitiveness and responsiveness are also under way with "dialogue Partners" such as China, Japan, Korea, India, the European Union, United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

China is helping to develop transportation infrastructure between ASEAN and China and has established a US\$ 10 billion **ASEAN-China Fund for Investment Cooperation** which will significantly contribute to the completion of transportation links in the region. An ASEAN-China Investment Agreement was signed in August 2009. An ASEAN-China Free Trade Area is being finalised and China has plans to provide US\$ 15 billion in commercial credit, including US\$ 1.7 billion in preferential loans, to ASEAN member states in the next 3-5 years.

Japan is supporting the ASEAN community-building process under a plan called "Growth Initiative towards Doubling the Size of Asia's Economy" to overcome the global economic slowdown and financial situation and safeguard the region from future crises. Japan has contributed US\$ 62 million to **Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF)** as emergency assistance to the ASEAN Member States affected by the global economic slowdown, as well as US\$ 13.5 million for cooperation on disaster management.

An **ASEAN-ROKorea Investment Agreement** has been signed and a target has been set to increase two-way trade volume to US\$ 150 billion by 2015 through the ASEAN-ROK FTA. ROK's has initiated the establishment of a US\$200 million East Asia Climate Change Partnership Fund and committed to allocating US\$100 million from this Fund to the ASEAN Member States to deal with climate change.

An **ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Fund** has been set up with an initial amount of US\$ 3 million. A Phase II feasibility study of East Asia Free Trade Area (EAFTA) is now under way and the final report is due to be submitted to the 12th ASEAN Plus Three Summit in October 2009.

An **ASEAN-India Agreement on Trade in Goods** was signed in Aug 2009, paving the way for the creation of one of the world's largest free trade areas (FTA) – a market of almost 1.8 billion people with a combined GDP of US\$ 2.75 trillion. The

ASEAN-India FTA will see tariff liberalisation of over 90 percent of products traded between the two regions. Tariffs on over 4,000 product lines will be eliminated by 2016, at the earliest. India and ASEAN have set an ambitious target of achieving bilateral trade of US \$ 50 billion by 2010.

An agreement establishing the **ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area** was signed during the 14th ASEAN Summit on 27 February 2009.

An **ASEAN-Russia Comprehensive Programme** is being implemented. Plans call for the establishment of an ASEAN Centre in Moscow later this year.

The **1st ASEAN-Gulf Cooperation Council Ministerial Meeting** was held on 29-30 June 2009 in Manama, Bahrain, and ended with the adoption of the ASEAN-GCC Joint Vision and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the ASEAN Secretariat and the GCC Secretariat.

The **1st ASEAN-MERCOSUR Ministerial Meeting** was held on 24 November 2008 in Brasilia, Brazil, at which ASEAN officials were tasked to prepare a regional roadmap and action plan on issues of mutual interest.

There are also numerous projects under way with the European Union and the United States. The European Union played a major role in providing financial and technical assistance in the formative years of ASEAN. European foundations and organisations continue to provide funding for specific projects. Indeed, the structure of ASEAN itself is patterned very much along the lines of the European Union and shares the goals and aspirations of the European Community.

Parliamentarians

As the legislative side of ASEAN, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly is being asked to assist in expediting the ratifications of ASEAN treaties and agreements. ASEAN secretariat statistics show that only 87 of the 134 - representing 65% - of regional legal economic instruments have entered into force as of February 2009. Parliamentarians are also being asked to ratify the documents as soon as possible.

Two First-Time Entrants: Civil Society & The Media

Civil Society: For the first time, the 14th ASEAN summit in February 2009 was accompanied by a raucous caucus of ASEAN civil society groups. These non-governmental organisations say they are “ready to make Article 1 of the ASEAN Charter on civil society participation a reality and give meaning to the people-oriented community building.” Representatives from the civil society groups were also granted a 30-minute meeting with the ASEAN heads of state, and presented a statement drafted by a 1,000-strong gathering of ASEAN civil society organisations, trade unions, and peoples’ organisations. Their concerns revolve primarily around human rights issue, especially the impact of globalisation, the financial and economic crisis, environmental disasters, etc.

The Media: Another “first” alongside the 14th ASEAN summit in February was the 1st ASEAN Media Forum (AMF) in Bangkok, under the theme of “Harnessing The Media For ASEAN Integration”. Journalists from across the ASEAN region argued passionately that ASEAN people need to interact more if a true community is to be forged and the media needs to play a crucial role in it. “It’s time not only to make ASEAN a grouping of governments, but also a real community which enjoys its diversity and sub-cultures,” said one Indonesian journalist.

Secretariat Changes

All these new developments and changes have led to commensurate changes in the ASEAN Secretariat which has just been restructured to help it respond more efficiently and effectively to the new challenges. Four departments have been set up, one for each pillar of the ASEAN Community while the fourth department focuses on community and corporate affairs. This will help better coordinate on cross-sectoral linkages within and across the three communities.

Since 2008, programmes and activities held at the ASEAN Secretariat have involved the civil society, the media and the academia. Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan says, “We are reaching out to all stakeholders in ASEAN. This will continue into the future.” He says that by 2015, the ASEAN Secretariat is projected to “be the nerve centre of a strong and confident ASEAN Community that is globally respected for acting in full compliance with its Charter and in the best interests of its people.”

ASEAN Travel and Tourism-Related Activities

ASEAN Tourism Agreement

At the 8th ASEAN Summit in November 2002 in Phnom Penh, ASEAN leaders signed the ASEAN Tourism Agreement which identifies the following objectives:

- 1) facilitating travel into and within ASEAN;
- 2) enhancing cooperation in the tourism industry to improve its efficiency and competitiveness;
- 3) substantially reducing restrictions to trade in tourism and travel services among ASEAN member countries;
- 4) establishing an integrated network of tourism and travel services in order to maximize the complementary nature of the region's tourist attractions;
- 5) promoting ASEAN as a single tourism destination with world-class standards, facilities and attractions;
- 6) enhancing mutual assistance in human resource development and training in the tourism sector; and
- 7) creating favourable conditions for the public and private sectors to engage more deeply in tourism development, intra-ASEAN travel and investment in tourism services and facilities.

The Agreement encompassed the following tourism policy issues:

- Facilitation of Intra-ASEAN and International Travel
- Transport Services
- Market Access
- Quality Tourism
- Tourism Safety and Security
- Joint Marketing and Promotion
- Human Resources Development

The full copy of the ASEAN Tourism Agreement is posted here:

<http://www.aseansec.org/13157.htm>

THE ASEAN TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN (2011-2015)

At their meeting on 8 January 2009, Ha Noi, Viet Nam, ASEAN tourism ministers “reaffirmed their commitment to accelerate the integration process” and, endorsed the initiative of the ASEAN NTOs to formulate the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2011-2015 as the successor to the Roadmap for Integration of Tourism Sector (RITS) 2004-2010 to further integrate tourism in the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 and to encourage joint tourism integration and promotion as well as travel facilitation and connectivity within ASEAN.

This plan is now being formulated and is due to be finalised in 2010.

Transportation

ASEAN NTOs and the senior transport sector officials are working to facilitate air, land and sea travel in the region, primarily with a view to boost intra-ASEAN travel. There is a desire to accelerate land links through initiatives such as facilitation of cross border land travel by tourist buses and the development of common tourism road signage. Regular consultations are taking place between the officials of cruise tourism and maritime transport working groups, and the Asia Cruise Association is involved in the development of cruise industry in ASEAN.

In May 2009, the ASEAN Multilateral Agreement on the Full Liberalisation of Air Freight Services and the ASEAN Multilateral Agreement on Air Services were signed by ASEAN Transport Ministers. These will create the competitive space for greater expansion and opportunities for air travel within the ASEAN region, in terms of more destinations, increased capacities and lower fares. Expected to come into force by December 2010, it provides for designated airlines of the ASEAN countries to operate unlimited frequencies to the capital cities of each other’s countries. At the same time, it provides a good indication of the ASEAN cities that will benefit from the next wave of ASEAN growth, thus:

- Brunei Darussalam: Bandar Seri Begawan
- Indonesia: Balikpapan, Manado, Pontianak and Tarakan, Medan, Padang, Banda Aceh, and Nias
- Malaysia: Kota Kinabalu, Labuan, Kuching and Miri; Langkawi, Penang, Alor Star, Ipoh and Kota Bharu

- The Philippines: Davao, General Santos, Puerto Princesa and Zamboanga;
- Cambodia: Phnom Penh
- Lao PDR: Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Pakse
- Myanmar: Yangon and Mandalay.
- Vietnam: Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, Dien Bien Phu, Phu Bai, Cat Bi and Lien Khuong
- Thailand: Hat Yai, Narathiwat, Pattani, Trang and Nakhon Si Thammarat

Other Activities

The ASEAN NTOs are also working on numerous other projects and activities:

- Upgrading and harmonising ASEAN tourism standards is a major focus of attention. Environmental standards are being upgraded through schemes like the ASEAN Green Hotel Award designed to promote sustainability and product quality.
- An ASEAN Homestay List also based on common standards is to be published during ATF 2010 in Brunei Darussalam.
- ASEAN Tourism Investment Forums (ATIF) are being held regularly. The Third ATIF was held on 6-9 July 2008 in Manila and will be held again in 2010 to promote the establishment of the ASEAN Tourism Investment Corridor Development.
- The Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals: The ASEAN NTOs are working on establishing the MRA follow-up requirements including the capacity development for members of related organisations under MRA at the regional and national level. Learning resources and supporting materials are also being developed to support the delivery of assessment and training in the workplace and educational institutions.
- A Youth Travellers' Year is being marked for 2009-10 and a tactical campaign is being formulated under the Visit ASEAN Campaign in preparation for announcement at the 14th ASEAN Summit in October 2009.

- The ASEAN Framework Agreement of Services: National workshops/events are being held for relevant stakeholders to promote the progress of the ASEAN Framework Agreement of Services in tourism sector.

Synergistic and Symbiotic Effect of ASEAN Integration on Tourism

This entire package of measures and agreements across all economic sectors of the ASEAN community will give a significant boost to all forms of travel and tourism. Effectively, they have paved the way for the next generation of growth by reducing or eliminating restrictions on the movements of people, goods and services within the ASEAN region.

- The boom in free trade will mean more travel for business, meetings, conventions and exhibitions, both within the ASEAN region and to/from its Dialogue Partner countries.
- Aviation liberalisation will mean greater airline linkages, right across the region.
- The secondary cities of ASEAN will be primary beneficiaries. This will be especially important both for economic growth but also ensuring a fairer distribution of income within the region and within countries themselves.
- A significant proportion of the growth will be more focussed on border crossings, spurring significant investments around the dozens of international checkpoints, especially in the Greater Mekong Subregion.
- The changing profile of visitors will require fundamental changes in the supply and design of products and services. For example, catering to the Chinese, Middle Eastern traffic and Indians, including millions of first-timers, will become as important as catering to the more seasoned travellers from Europe and North America.
- The growth will allow a more even spread of tourism flows and address the issue of seasonality-driven peaks and troughs in the demand cycles.
- The Mutual Recognition Agreement for professional and educational standards will mean greater mobility of qualified manpower across the region. This will become necessary, almost vital, in order to cater to the changing customer-profiles.

- It will create significant new business opportunities both within the travel & tourism industry as well as amongst suppliers of products and services to the industry, ranging from training to food & beverage and Information Technology.

But there will also be side-effects and negative consequences

- Small & medium sized businesses will be affected by the increased competition.
- There will be increased environmental concerns, further pressure on infrastructure and natural resources, social issues like the spread of organised crime, even increased nationalistic sentiments and a greater trend towards “deglobalisation.”

This then sets the agenda for the second era of growth: To create mechanisms, support facilities to better integrate that growth in line with the principles of ASEAN and build strong bridges in the fields of culture, heritage and the environment – the critically important Identity factor.

PART THREE

Setting A New Direction For Tourism Integration: The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (2009-2015)

In analysing the objectives, mandates, agreements, activities, projects and plans, a clear window of opportunity emerges for the ASEAN tourism industry to a) play a more significant role in regional integration and the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community 2015, and b) prepare judiciously and wisely for the second era of growth, by learning from the mistakes of the past, and taking full cognizance of all the forces of change that are set to shape the future.

For the ASEAN travel & tourism industry, perhaps the most important reference document to emerge from the 14th ASEAN summit in Hua Hin/Cha-am is the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint. This contains a series of specific recommendations and provides a very clear roadmap for building an ASEAN identity. It is available in full here: <http://www.aseansec.org/5187-19.pdf>

The ASEAN tourism industry can play a leading role in implementing these specific recommendations. By doing so, it will not only be executing the mandate of the ASEAN leaders, but also taking strong steps towards both promoting intra-ASEAN travel and forging closer regional integration.

This mandate can and should become the basis of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2009-15.

Interestingly, this ASCC Blueprint has received perhaps the least publicity, primarily because it does not gel with the traditional industry mindset of pursuing ways to generate growth. It would not be too far fetched to assume that not many ASEAN travel & tourism industry leaders, in either the public or private sectors, have carefully read through it, and recognised it for what it is – a virtually ready-to-implement roadmap for a long-overdue broadening of the travel & tourism agenda.

The ASCC Blueprint had its origins in the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore where on 20 November 2007, the ASEAN leaders agreed to ensure that concrete actions are undertaken to promote the establishment of an ASCC. Its primary goals are:

◇ to “contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-centred and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the

nations and peoples of ASEAN by forging a common identity and building a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the well-being, livelihood and welfare of the peoples are enhanced.”

◇ to “address the region’s aspiration to lift the quality of life of its peoples through cooperative activities that are people-oriented and environmentally friendly geared towards the promotion of sustainable development. The ASCC shall contribute to building a strong foundation for greater understanding, good neighbourliness, and a shared sense of responsibility.”

The ASCC’s fundamental premise is that it “shall respect the different cultures, languages, and religions of the peoples of ASEAN, emphasise their common values in the spirit of unity in diversity and adapt them to present realities, opportunities and challenges.”

It comprises the following components: (a) Human Development; (b) Social Welfare and Protection; (c) Social Justice and Rights; (d) Ensuring Environmental Sustainability (e) Building the ASEAN Identity; and (f) Narrowing the Development Gap.

Each one of these topics is driven by a number of strategic objectives. This researcher carefully and meticulously went through the entire 33-page ASCC Blueprint and identified those sections with a clear relevance to and role for the integration of travel & tourism, as follows:

Advancing and prioritising education: Ensuring the integration of education priorities into ASEAN’s development agenda and creating a knowledge-based society; achieving universal access to primary education; promoting early child care and development; and enhancing awareness of ASEAN to youths through education and activities to build an ASEAN identity based on friendship and cooperation.

Investing in human resource development: Enhance and improve the capacity of ASEAN human resource through strategic programmes and develop a qualified, competent and well-prepared ASEAN labour force that would benefit from as well as cope with the challenges of regional integration.

Incorporate decent work principles in ASEAN work culture, safety and health at work place and ensure that the promotion of entrepreneurship becomes an integral part of ASEAN's employment policy to achieve a forward-looking employment strategy.

Strengthening entrepreneurship skills for women, youth, elderly and persons with disabilities: Increase the participation of women, youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, vulnerable and marginalised groups in the productive workforce by enhancing their entrepreneurial skills, particularly to improve their social well-being and contribute towards national development and regional economic integration.

Building civil service capability: Establish effective, efficient, transparent, responsive and accountable civil service systems through increased capacity-building, enhancement of public human resource competencies among ASEAN bureaucracies, and increased collaboration among ASEAN Member States.

Poverty Alleviation: Fully address socio-economic disparities and poverty that persist across ASEAN Member States including achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

Social safety net and protection from the negative impacts of integration and globalization: Ensure that all ASEAN peoples are provided with social welfare and protection from the possible negative impacts of globalisation and integration by improving the quality, coverage and sustainability of social protection and increasing the capacity of social risk management.

Access to healthcare and promotion of healthy lifestyles: Ensure access to adequate and affordable healthcare, medical services and medicine, and promote healthy lifestyles for the peoples of ASEAN.

Building disaster-resilient nations and safer communities: Strengthen effective mechanisms and capabilities to prevent and reduce disaster losses in lives, and in social, economic, and environmental assets of ASEAN Member States and to jointly respond to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation.

Promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities: Safeguard the interests and rights as well as

provide equal opportunities, and raise the quality of life and standard of living, for women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

Ensure fair and comprehensive migration policies and adequate protection for all migrant workers in accordance with the laws, regulations and policies of respective ASEAN Member States as well as implement the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility: Ensure that Corporate Social Responsibility is incorporated in the corporate agenda and to contribute towards sustainable socio-economic development in ASEAN Member States.

Promoting sustainable development through environmental education and public participation: Establish a clean and green ASEAN, rich in cultural traditions where the values and practices of the people are in accordance with the rhythm and harmony of nature, with citizens who are environmentally literate, imbued with the environmental ethic, and willing and capable to ensure the sustainable development of the region through environmental education and public participation efforts.

Promoting quality living standards in ASEAN cities/urban areas: Ensure cities/urban areas in ASEAN are environmentally sustainable, while meeting the social and economic needs of the people.

Promoting sustainable use of coastal and marine environment: Ensure ASEAN's coastal and marine environment are sustainably managed; representative ecosystems, pristine areas and species are protected; economic activities are sustainably managed; and public awareness of the coastal and marine environment instilled.

Building an ASEAN Identity: Create a sense of belonging, consolidate unity in diversity and enhance deeper mutual understanding among ASEAN Member States about their culture, history, religion, and civilisation.

Preservation and promotion of ASEAN cultural heritage: Promote the conservation and preservation of ASEAN cultural heritage to ensure its continuity to enhance awareness and understanding of the people about the unique history of the region and the cultural similarities and differences between and among ASEAN Member States as well as to protect the distinctiveness of ASEAN cultural heritage as a whole.

Promotion of Cultural Creativity and Industry: Enhance ASEAN identity and togetherness through cultural creativity and the promotion and cooperation on cultural industry.

Engagement with the community: To inculcate an ASEAN identity and build a people-oriented ASEAN where people are at the centre of community building, through the participation of all sectors of society.

Narrowing The Development Gap: Strengthen cooperation to reduce the development gap in particular the social dimensions of development between the ASEAN-6 and the CLMV countries and within ASEAN where some isolated pockets of under development persist.

The ASCC Blueprint's Action Recommendations of Relevance to ASEAN Tourism Integration

For the travel & tourism industry, by far the most important element of the ASCC Blueprint is the new focus on building an ASEAN identity which takes the agenda well beyond even building an ASEAN brand. The Blueprint emphatically lays out the mandate thus:

“The ASEAN identity is the basis of Southeast Asia’s regional interests. It is our collective personality, norms, values and beliefs as well as aspirations as one ASEAN community. ASEAN will mainstream and promote greater awareness and common values in the spirit of unity in diversity at all levels of society.”

Some of its key recommended actions to implement the strategic objectives in building an ASEAN identity are of direct relevance to travel & tourism, thus:

- ◆ Undertake a coordinated production of printed, broadcast and multimedia materials on ASEAN to be reproduced and disseminated by national information agencies and private agencies of ASEAN Member States starting in 2009;
- ◆ Engage the mainstream media in promoting, on a continuing basis, all ASEAN programmes and projects, including ASEAN’s cultural heritage and arts and the work of COCI (Committee on Culture and Information);

- ◆ Increase media exchange and networking of communication personnel among ASEAN Member States and between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners;
- ◆ Support school activities promoting ASEAN awareness, such as by encouraging the observance of the annual ASEAN Day;
- ◆ Initiate the establishment of linkages among ASEAN cities and townships, especially those with cultural arts and heritage elements;
- ◆ Support the ASEAN Foundation's mandate to promote ASEAN identity and awareness and people-to-people interactions, primarily within ASEAN, but also between ASEAN and its friends and partners;
- ◆ Promote ASEAN sporting events in the national and private media such as the SEA Games and PARA Games;
- ◆ Encourage the use of ASEAN Anthem and other ASEAN Symbols to raise ASEAN awareness in ASEAN Member States;
- ◆ Encourage the establishment of ASEAN associations at national levels to promote awareness of ASEAN in ASEAN Member States;
- ◆ Encourage the deepening of understanding and tolerance among the peoples of ASEAN through interfaith dialogue and ensuring adequate exposure of these events in the media;
- ◆ Promote a culture of tolerance among media personnel about the diverse culture, religion and ethnicity of ASEAN by conducting enhanced inter-media dialogue among ASEAN media and in cooperation with other international actors;
- ◆ Enhance the use of and the capability to utilize new media technologies such as digital broadcasting to promote ASEAN awareness and identity and facilitating ASEAN media industry collaborations to showcase Member States' culture, developments and talents;
- ◆ Strengthen national capabilities in the preservation and promotion of audio-visual heritage;
- ◆ Encourage cooperation and networking including book exchange programmes among libraries in ASEAN;

- ◆ Disseminate ASEAN culture, social traditions and values particularly among the young generation through the media.
- ◆ Mobilise the mass media and other cultural institutions to disseminate and share information on ASEAN culture, developments, accomplishments, benefits, and objectives to the people;
- ◆ Promote cultural tourism and the development of related industries by establishing working relations between and among the ASEAN culture and tourism officials and the private sector;
- ◆ Preserve and develop the traditional handicraft villages and occupations in the rural areas, particularly among ethnic minority groups;
- ◆ Encourage youth exchanges such via youth camps and similar activities to promote ASEAN arts and culture performances, ASEAN awareness and a sense of community among the public; and
- ◆ Include the studies on ASEAN arts and culture as well as their values in school curriculum.

Other Key Action Recommendations Of The ASCC Blueprint

In addition to the above, a number of other recommendations in the ASCC Blueprint are of indirect relevance to travel & tourism, as follows:

- Develop or improve national legislations and regional instruments/mechanisms to protect, preserve and promote ASEAN cultural heritage and living traditions of each ASEAN Member State by 2015;
- Document and manage significant ASEAN cultural heritage in a whole of ASEAN context;
- Undertake studies on the establishment of an ASEAN Cultural Centre in each ASEAN Member State as well as ASEAN dialogue partner countries;
- Nurture talents and promote interactions among ASEAN scholars, artists, and heritage media practitioners to help preserve and promote ASEAN Cultural Diversity while fostering regional identity as well as cultivating people awareness of ASEAN

- Promote the development of cultural industry resources by facilitating collaborations and networking between and among small and medium-sized cultural enterprises (SMCEs);
- Promote and support the development of cultural industries through the exchange of knowledge and best practices by respecting branded national cultural industries;
- Develop and support young people's capacity for original ideas and action in the area of culture and arts;
- Promote wider opportunities for cultural creativity among youth and all sectors of the population, including the ethnic groups;
- Promote marketing and distribution of cultural products and services;
- Engage ASEAN-affiliated non-governmental organisations in ASEAN Community building process;
- Convene the ASEAN Social Forum and the ASEAN Civil Society Conference on an annual basis to explore the best means for effective dialogue, consultations and cooperation between ASEAN and ASEAN civil society;
- Explore the establishment of an ASEAN volunteers programme, to be composed of young professionals, with focus on supporting rural development and assisting communities to help themselves by 2009.

A 12-Point Action Plan For A New Direction of ASEAN Tourism Integration

Barring any further external shocks, the ASEAN travel & tourism sector is set to ride the wave of progress in the economic, business, transport and infrastructure sectors of ASEAN integration. They will facilitate the regulatory changes needed to expedite investment flows and business travel.

Hence, it is now ready to rise to the next level and take a leadership role in building the ASEAN identity. The upcoming ASEAN Tourism Forum in Brunei Darussalam in January 2010 presents a clear window of opportunity to refocus and rebalance the entire industry towards the new issues that will arise.

Indeed, an ASEAN identity can only be created by the ASEAN people better understanding each other's culture, roots, history, languages and heritage. This will mean having to flip the former tourism development model around to educating first and promoting later.

The following is a 12-point action plan for building upon the directions and mandate mentioned in the ASCC with some specific actions that can be taken by the ASEAN travel & tourism industry. They are also designed for inclusion in the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (2009-15).

The recommended actions will: a) help make ASEAN travel & tourism a major contributor to the enhancement of the ASEAN identity; b) promote intra-regional tourism; and 3) help implement the UN's Millennium Development Goals. They also fit in with ASEAN countries' own national tourism and socio-cultural-economic development plans.

They purport to be new, creative, innovative ideas that are cost-effective, implementable voluntarily by the private sector and any other interested parties. They will not require any heavy-duty funding, regulatory changes or new institutional machinery. Nor will they duplicate any existing activities.

Furthermore, they are within the new direction of the UNWTO as it seeks to build a tourism industry for the 21st century that moves beyond creating growth and more towards managing growth. They will also help enhance private-public sector cooperation in an entirely new manner.

1. To enhance the ASEAN brand is of paramount importance. Use of the ASEAN logo should be vigorously expanded by all travel & tourism companies in the ASEAN countries. The ASEAN presence at all trade shows should include the logo and mission statement (One Vision, One Identity, One Caring and Sharing Community) in and above all the booths of the ASEAN countries. It should be included on all name-cards, websites, stationery, brochures, and prominently displayed in airports, hotels, convention centres, etc.
2. ASEAN NTO meetings should expand their dialogue with the transport officials and regularly interact with ASEAN's environmental, education and

culture delegations, to get full briefings of what they are doing, and formulate joint plans about what can be done in future.

3. Compile a joint publication of “do’s and don’ts in the ASEAN region.” Many visitors to the region and within the region do not understand simple basics of behaviour in the ASEAN countries.
4. Use the lobbies, galleries and other public function rooms of hotels, airports, convention centres to exhibit regular works by ASEAN artists. Hold regular festivals to promote ASEAN cuisine, culture, music and dance.
5. Bring the ASEAN tour guides into the mainstream. A lot more can be done to raise their level of mutual understanding and professionalism in advancing the identity-creation goals of ASEAN.
6. Research the role of women in the ASEAN travel & tourism industry. This industry is known to be one of the highest employers of women, especially in the provincial areas where jobs are most important.
7. Create an ASEAN health and wellness manual – expand the list of spas, meditation centres, medical facilities into one manual and upload on a common website.
8. Promote a conference of indigenous peoples – all the ASEAN countries have rich heritage of indigenous peoples, such as the Dayaks, Hmongs, etc. There is a global focus on the future survival of indigenous peoples and it is important for them to be brought into the mainstream development process.
9. Organise an ASEAN civil society tourism conference. Many civil society groups play an important role in raising public awareness of issues like child-sex tourism and environmental destruction. They need to be encouraged and empowered.
10. Use the ASEAN tourism media to good advantage. The media can play a very valuable role in the future development of travel & tourism, especially in terms of exerting a check-and-balance influence. This will lead to a more healthy and professional industry.

11. Conduct research on People with Disabilities in the ASEAN region and establish ways of providing them with gainful employment and providing them with more facilities to travel.
12. Forge stronger ties with ASEAN museums, ASEAN heritage parks and UNESCO World Heritage sites to generate income for these treasures and attract a new level of tourists.

Implementation Mandate and Mechanism

The ASCC Blueprint also includes clear directions of how to monitor progress and implementation. It says, “All relevant ASEAN ministerial bodies or their equivalent shall be responsible in ensuring effective implementation of the various elements, actions and commitments in the Blueprint by reflecting them in their respective work plans, mobilizing resources for them, and undertaking national initiatives in order to meet these commitments.”

It envisages the creation of an ASCC Council to be “accountable for the overall implementation of the Blueprint and ensure coordination of efforts under its purview as well as those which cut across the other Community Councils.”

It recommends the following measures to ensure effective implementation:

- i. Mainstream the strategies, targets and actions of the ASCC Blueprint, and incorporate them in respective national development plans;
- ii. Endeavour to ratify relevant ASEAN Agreements within a timeline in accordance with the internal processes of each ASEAN Member State;
- iii. Engage the Dialogue Partners, the private sector, civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders in ensuring timely implementation of agreed measures;
- iv. Identify and implement technical studies or training programmes on issues, areas or topics where analytical as well as capacity building supports are required;
- v. Strengthen the capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat in areas relevant to the ASCC;
- vi. Strengthen the capabilities of each ASEAN Member State especially in research and human capital development; and

vii. Establish appropriate capacity building programmes to assist new Member States in enhancing the achievement of the ASCC.

The Secretary-General of ASEAN is entrusted with the responsibility of reporting on the progress of implementation of the ASCC Blueprint to relevant ministerial meetings and Councils, and to the ASEAN Summit.

It also calls for the requisite financial resources, expertise, research and capacity building for the implementation to be mobilized, among others, from ASEAN Member States; Dialogue, Sectoral and Development Partners; Regional and International Institutions in particular the ADB, the World Bank/IFC, the UN; Regional and International Foundations; and Private Sectors.

The Blueprint notes that effective communications with all stakeholders in the integration process will be critical to its success by creating greater public awareness of the ASCC in all ASEAN Member States as well as to keep all stakeholders, including the social/cultural communities and people of ASEAN, informed of the progress. Hence, it suggests the following actions:

- i. Launch a comprehensive communications plan to explain to government officials, key stakeholders and the general public the objectives, benefits and challenges of the ASCC;
- ii. Undertake activities to promote open discussion and sharing of information in implementing the ASCC;
- iii. Member States shall set up a mechanism at the national level to regularly report the outcome and issues of the integration process; and
- iv. Create an ASCC communications website that would provide an additional channel to reach communities at large, where stakeholders can provide feedback and respond to ASEAN socio-cultural initiatives.

Finally, the ASCC Blueprint lays out the framework for a Review Mechanism to monitor progress. The ASEAN Secretariat is tasked with developing and adopting “indicators and systems to monitor and assess the progress of implementation of the various elements and actions in the Blueprint.” However, it does not set a specific time frame, thus: “The mid-term review of the implementation of the ASCC Blueprint

can be undertaken whenever necessary, taking into account the changing dynamics of the region and the global environment.”

The same report card mechanism established under the ASCC Blueprint can also be adapted to monitor progress in the action plans to integrate travel & tourism. This will prove to all the ASEAN stakeholders at large that ASEAN tourism is serious about implementing its plans, and significantly enhance the role, visibility and respectability of the industry in the eyes of its peers.

Role of the UNWTO

1. Provide information pertaining to policies related to tourism development, investment opportunities and sharing of economic data of relevance to ASEAN;
2. Provide assistance to ASEAN in identifying training needs for quality and sustainable tourism development, particularly in the areas of policy development, the implementation of Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), and strategic plans of sustainable development for tourism destination;
3. Promote and facilitate undertaking of tourism-related projects or other related activities on mutually-agreed terms;
4. Facilitate organizing Seminars, Workshops and interface meetings, wherever possible in cooperation with ASEAN and also meetings at regular intervals between the members of UNWTO and ASEAN with a view to exploring and discussing new opportunities and avenues for development and promotion of tourism;
5. Consider constituting joint committees or fora for business and government interaction and organizing joint programme.

Conclusion

In the words of ASEAN Secretary-General Dr Surin Pitsuwan, the peoples of the region are now on the threshold of an historic opportunity. So is the travel & tourism industry.

The economic benefits of the travel & tourism industry are now well-recognised. The means of achieving short-term gain in terms of job creation and foreign exchange earnings are well in place.

The time has now come to take the industry into a new era of attaining a more important long-term goal -- building socio-cultural understanding, environmental sustainability and grassroots-oriented public participation.



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