

The APEC Tourism Charter in Plain Language

MEETING FOR the first time in Seoul, Korea (ROK), July 6-7, 2000, tourism ministers of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) caucus adopted the "Seoul Declaration on an APEC Tourism Charter" which presents a vision of tourism in the new millennium and offers a direction for its development.

The Charter establishes four key policy goals:

1. Remove impediments to tourism business and investment
2. Increase mobility of visitors and demand for tourism goods and services in the APEC region
3. Sustainably manage tourism outcomes and impacts
4. Enhance recognition and understanding of tourism as a vehicle for economic and social development

It then sets out an agreed process for achieving these policy goals by liberalising barriers, enhancing competitiveness, building capability, promoting positive tourism development policies, discouraging practices which have a negative impact on APEC member economies and on the image of tourism, and identifying emerging issues impacting upon tourism.

The Charter was drafted with the help of numerous international bodies, including PATA. PATA believes implementation of the Charter will further enhance its own objective to grow the quality and quantity of Pacific Asia travel and facilitate investment, accessibility and sustainability.

Indeed, it was alongside the PATA Annual Conference in Hong Kong SAR on April 29 that the agenda for the Seoul ministerial meeting was agreed upon. The background work was done by APEC's Tourism Working Group (APEC TWG) which has convened several times

over the last few years to make tourism fully involved in the overall APEC plan for regional economic development.

Other international organisations that helped draft the Charter include the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

At the 12th TWG meeting in Mexico City, Korea (ROK) offered to host the first APEC tourism ministerial conference and then played a major role in convening it. A secretariat was established as early as November 1999, as well as a Web site containing all relevant information and registration details.

Korean (ROK) President Mr. Kim Dae Jung himself presided at the opening, noting in his speech that this was the first time that Pacific Asia tourism ministers had met to recognise the role and importance of the tourism industry in the economic growth of Pacific Asia and to clear the way for private companies to do business (see sidebar).

Seoul Declaration on an APEC Tourism Charter

The declaration captures the spirit of agreement and shared purpose for the development of tourism within APEC countries. It reflects a collective commitment to improve the economic, cultural, social and environmental well being of APEC member economies through tourism. The policy goals and processes adopted in the Charter are consistent with the goals for free and open trade and investment established in APEC's "Bogor Declaration" and the general principles for trade liberalisation and economic and technical cooperation established in the Osaka Action Agenda.

The ministers recognise the significant contribution tourism makes to APEC economies and the goals of APEC, and sign off on their intent to further develop this contribution through tourism.

The Charter states, "The high level of intra-regional tourism and the experience of the recent Asian currency crisis has highlighted the importance of APEC's broader goals to strengthen our respective economies and provide a stronger platform for sustainable development, economic growth and cooperation. We therefore affirm these broader goals and encourage their achievement in the interests of advancing tourism in the APEC region and the benefits tourism delivers to our economies."

The ministers also "recognise and value the many non-economic benefits that tourism provides for our respective economies," in particular fostering cross-cultural understanding; promoting local and indigenous cultures, arts and heritage; highlighting the need to preserve the social and cultural fabric and integrity of host communities; and promoting world peace by developing international cooperation in a spirit of friendship, dialogue and understanding.

The Charter also defines a clear business plan and work programme for the TWG which has also been tasked "to move quickly to implement the Charter and provide regular progress reports to future tourism ministerial meetings."

While most of the issues raised in the Charter are directly within the portfolio jurisdiction of tourism ministers, it recognises that there are many other issues outside the ministers' jurisdiction that can further enhance tourism development, such as transportation and facilitation. Thus, the Charter responds to the request of economic leaders to expand the level of cooperation and dialogue between APEC members.

It also recognises the importance of the "key partnership" between the public and private sector to deliver tourism objectives and achieve Charter goals.

Policy Goals

The Charter establishes the following policy goals:

1. Remove impediments to tourism business and investment

This will be done by promoting and facilitating the mobility of skills, training and labour as well as productive investment in tourism and associated sectors; removing regulatory impediments to business and investment; and encouraging liberalisation of services under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

2. Increase mobility of visitors and demand for tourism goods and services in the APEC region

This will be done by facilitating seamless travel for visitors; enhancing visitor experiences; promoting inter- and intra-regional marketing opportunities and cooperation; facilitating and promoting e-commerce for tourism business; enhancing safety and security of visitors; and fostering a non-discriminatory approach to the provision of visitor facilities and services.

3. Sustainably manage tourism outcomes and impacts

This will be done by pursuing policies that demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of the natural environment and seek to protect that environment; foster ecologically sustainable development opportunities across the tourism sector, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, employment and providing for open and sustainable tourism markets; protect the social integrity of host communities with particular attention to the implications of gender in the management and development of tourism; recognise, respect and preserve local and indigenous cultures together with natural and national cultural heritage; and enhance capability building in the management and development of tourism.

APEC wants to make sure tourism attractions are maintained as long-term assets for all future generations.

MEMBERS OF APEC

**Australia,
Brunei Darussalam,
Canada, Chile,
China (PRC),
Chinese Taipei,
Hong Kong SAR,
Indonesia, Japan,
Korea (ROK), Malaysia,
Mexico, New Zealand,
Papua New Guinea,
Peru, the Philippines,
Russia, Singapore,
Thailand,
the United States
and Vietnam.**

QUOTE FROM PRESIDENT MR. KIM DAE JUNG ON TOURISM AND PEACE

We learn from history that tourism has contributed to the resolution of regional conflicts and to world peace. This is being proven on the Korean peninsula. South and North Korea began tours to Kungangsan, the Diamond Mountains, in the North in November 1998. This began to foster an atmosphere reconciliation on the peninsula, promoted exchanges and became an important turning point for the settlement of peace.

For three days between June 13 and 15, 2000, I visited North Korea, climbing over the barrier of 55 years of division. I agreed with North Korean leaders that we would not repeat the tragedy of war but would cooperate in many areas including economy, civic affairs and culture. Achievements like these were made possible by tourism.

From now on, tourism will continue to play an important role in reconciliation and cooperation as well as peace and unification by dismantling 55 years of division of the country.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask APEC members to broaden people-to-people exchanges and mutual understanding with North Korea by designating the North as a tourist destination and the object of cooperation. Thus, I hope you will cooperate with us so that South and North Korea can work together for genuine unity and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region.

The Republic of Korea has already declared 2001 as Visit Korea Year, to contribute to world peace through the promotion of tourism. Moreover, the United Nations has declared 2000 as the Year of World Peace and Culture.

I believe that now is the best time for workers in the tourism industry to play a role for world peace. It is time for them to expand the framework for peace that was formed through the tours of Kungangsan to the entire APEC region and further to the world.

4. Enhance recognition and understanding of tourism as a vehicle for economic and social development

This will be done by harmonising the methods for collecting tourism statistics, consistent with activities of other international tourism organisations; facilitating the exchange of information on tourism between economies; promoting comprehensive analysis of the role of tourism in member economies in promoting sustainable growth; and expanding APEC's collective knowledge base on tourism issues in order to identify emerging issues and assist implementation of the Charter.

What Next?

To follow up the Charter's policy goals with firm action, the APEC ministers agreed to a two-fold strategy: 1) things they need to and can do in areas that come under their own jurisdiction and 2) things they need to accomplish via other APEC forums, such as changes in transportation, investment and beating facilitation obstacles.

Thus, APEC tourism bodies will develop and implement individual action plans (IAPs) and collective action plans (CAPs) and identify issues for consideration by other APEC forums. The IAP and CAP plans will be developed through the TWG.

Identification of issues for consideration by other APEC forums will be deemed as necessary by consensus and will be non-binding to member economies. This is consistent with APEC practise.

Nomination Phase

By February 2001: Individual governments will nominate issues they wish to raise under the CAPs as well the package of issues to be referred to other APEC forums for consideration.

By May 2001: Nomination of IAPs on matters relating to policy goals agreed in the APEC Charter.

By May 2001: Governments will have an opportunity to engage others in bi/multilateral discussion on action plans relating to APEC Charter policy goals.

By May 2001: The TWG will agree on other issues to be referred to other APEC forums and prepare a comprehensive schedule of IAPs and CAPs.

Response Phase

By May 2002: APEC economies to confirm and update IAPs for the TWG, including action plans agreed in bi/multilateral discussions.

By May 2002: The TWG will meet again to finalise IAPs and CAPs as well as issues to be referred to other APEC forums.

July 2002: The endorsement of a comprehensive schedule by the second meeting of tourism ministers.

Monitoring, Research and Review Phase

Every February thereafter, APEC economies will 1) report back on what follow-up actions have been taken to implement the IAPs and CAPs and 2) nominate additions to IAPs as well as additional issues for CAPs and referral by the TWG to other APEC forums for consideration.

The delivery against action plans will be verified annually for a report to the TWG in October in line with independent verification procedures employed elsewhere by APEC.

The TWG will confirm annually in May changes to IAPs and agree on additions to CAPs as well as issues for referral to other APEC forums.

The TWG will report annually in October on emerging issues and trends in tourism to guide consideration of IAPs and CAPs and issues identified to ensure and maintain the relevance of the Charter.

The above schedule may be amended and/or modified by the TWG as is deemed appropriate to further the goals and objectives of the Charter. Any such modifications will be advised to the ministers at regular meetings.

The second APEC tourism ministerial meeting will be held in Manzanillo, Colima, Mexico, in July 2002. The ministers will review the schedule of IAPs and CAPs developed by the TWG, review implementation and discuss any modifications to the Charter.

The Charter references three key delivery dates: 2005, 2010 and 2020.

Help for Those Who Need It

Three countries have offered to help other APEC states with implementation of three of the policy goals of the APEC Charter. They are New Zealand (sustainable

tourism development), Canada (tourism satellite accounts) and Australia (tourism information networks).

Sustainable Tourism Development: New Zealand prepared the Statement of Commitment from APEC economies that clearly identified the various policy parameters that must guide sustainable tourism development. This statement was adopted by the ministers with the view that it be used by the TWG in examining further measures to promote tourism sustainability.

Tourism Satellite Accounts: To help APEC economies implement the TSAs, Canada has pledged to make available its own publications on the subject, as well as training manuals and training materials; facilitate and organise training seminars and conferences; provide technical assistance; and undertake case studies of compliance requirements to harmonise existing TSAs with improved standards.

Tourism Information Network: This will be a central data warehouse for information on the APEC tourism sector and will enhance access to information made available by APEC economies and other tourism organisations. Australia has agreed to pursue the feasibility of building a network of APEC tourism research centres along the lines of its own Co-operative Research Centre. It has also submitted a paper outlining how this can be done in three stages between 2001 and 2004.

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