



SIHANOUKVILLE DECLARATION ON MULTILATERAL COOPERATION FOR ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Under the aegis of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), over 300 participants from over 20 countries, comprising of tourism leaders and captains of the industry representing the public sector, private sector, academic institutions, civil societies and ecotourism stakeholders congregated at the 3rd World Ecotourism Conference 2011, at Preah Sihanouk Province, Kingdom of Cambodia, 3 - 5 October 2011;

AND

The Ministry of Tourism, Cambodia; the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR; the Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia; the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar, and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Vietnam, represented by the respective Honourable Ministers, Deputy Ministers and heads of delegates met at the 1st Ministerial Round Table Meeting on Multilateral Cooperation for Ecotourism Development on 4th October 2011, a parallel session held in conjunction with the 3rd World Ecotourism Conference at Preah Sihanouk Province, Kingdom of Cambodia, hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Kingdom of Cambodia adopted the following Declaration;

The Ministry of Tourism of Kenya and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism of Tanzania recognized the value and the importance of the Declaration;

Reaffirming the United Nations declaration of International Year of Ecotourism 2002 as well as the World Ecotourism Summit 2002, producing the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism 2002, the UN Resolution adopted in December 2010 on promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environmental protection, and the 1st World Ecotourism Conference producing the Vientiane

Declaration on Ecotourism for Developing Countries 2009, endorsed by the UNWTO;

Recognizing the commitment of UNWTO to the cause of ecotourism having organised related regional conferences and seminars, as well as having contributed to or published research projects, declarations, books and studies to raise the level of awareness on ecotourism;

Recognizing the commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia, as the host country of this 3rd World Ecotourism Conference 2011, in developing ecotourism in a sustainable and responsible manner so as to contribute to poverty alleviation and respond to climate change;

Acknowledging that sustainable management of ecosystem will play an important role in promoting ecotourism development and improving climate resilience of local communities and tourists;

Mindful of the various declarations promoting regional cooperation for tourism - ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks 2003, ASEAN Declaration on Enhancing ASEAN Tourism Cooperation 2004, Langkawi Declaration on Shifting Paradigm, Prospering The Region 2005 and Siem Reap Declaration on Mekong Tourism 2005;

Recalling the initiatives made during the 1st World Ecotourism Conference 2009, held in Vientiane, Lao PDR and the 2nd World Ecotourism Conference 2010, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to bring global ecotourism players together to network, collaborate and share their experiences, best practices and technologies for the betterment of nature conservation, environment protection, preservation of local /culture and consequently the advancement of ecotourism around the world;

Reiterating in particular the vision and four affirmative actions, Synergies and Partnerships, Measuring the Value of Ecotourism Products and Services, Capacity Building and Role of Academia and Inception of Asia Pacific Ecotourism Society (APES), collectively adopted under the Vientiane Declaration on Ecotourism for Developing Countries 2009 and endorsed by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO);

Recognizing the importance of global sustainable tourism criteria (GSTC) as a tool to define and implement global standards in sustainable tourism;

Acknowledging the limitations of this consultative process to incorporate the input of all developing countries, including key representatives from the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS), the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) and Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA);

Recognising the fruition of three (3) affirmative actions adopted under the Vientiane Declaration on Ecotourism for Developing Countries 2009 with

- a) the formation of the Asia Pacific Ecotourism Society with provisional members from 14 countries, to foster public-private-people partnerships in delivering the action plans and achieving the vision and goals set forth;
- b) the inception of the 1st Ministerial Round Table on Multilateral Cooperation for Ecotourism Development held in conjunction with the World Ecotourism Conference, committing to adaptive synergies and public-private sector partnerships;
- c) the inception of the Ecotourism Research Symposium at the World Ecotourism Conference 2011 to reinforce the role of academia in incorporating sustainable principles and ideology in tourism education curriculum.

And in pursuance of the following aspirations,

- a) Developing ecotourism not only as a socio-economic tool for poverty alleviation but also as an emerging and vibrant tourism economic activity to revitalize vast rural areas economically, contributing to the conservation of natural resources, reducing the causes of global warming and responding to the climate change mitigation;
- b) Development of projects of varying scale, managing in an appropriate, sustainable and responsible manner, to designated ecotourism areas that can deliver positive and valuable economic returns to local communities and natural areas;
- c) Unlocking abundant rural and natural resources for sustainable tourism development and ecotourism activities;
- d) Marketing and positioning the region in the world ecotourism map.

Do hereby declare:

- 1) To share experiences and exchange best practices in the programs and activities in the development, management, capacity building and marketing of ecotourism;
- 2) To gradually develop multipronged strategies for the development and promotion of ecotourism including advising the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) or any relevant United Nations agency to take the necessary steps to support, endorse, fund or assist in any identified initiatives or programmes that promote sustainable tourism development and ecotourism pursuits particularly in developing countries;
- 3) To collaborate with the Asia Pacific Ecotourism Society (APES), to undertake the formulation of an institutional framework for regional cooperation for the development and advancement of ecotourism in the Asia Pacific region;
- 4) To encourage development partners to strongly take into consideration regional ecotourism development through directly incorporating technical and financial supports into their development agendas;
- 5) To pursue ecotourism development based on geographical, social and economic characteristics, encompassing involvement and contributions from a wider range of stakeholders to guarantee comprehensive, sustainable and responsible growth, by developing and encouraging the development of projects of varying scale in a responsible and sustainable manner within the framework of the regional countries.
- 6) To follow up related ecotourism declarations and the UNWTO resolutions for ecotourism development;

All participants recognize the importance of organizing the annual World Ecotourism Conference and acknowledge that the formalisation of multilateral cooperation and more specific terms of references shall continue to be discussed among us.

Done in Preah Sihanouk Province, Kingdom of Cambodia on 4th October 2011