

Vientiane Declaration on Ecotourism in Developing Countries

With the support of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Pacific Asia Tourism Association (PATA) and The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), over 300 participants comprising the public, private and non-governmental sectors from 30 countries met at the World Ecotourism Conference 2009, hosted by Lao National Tourism Administration in Vientiane, Lao PDR between 15 and 17 July 2009.

The participants of the World Ecotourism Conference, comprising representatives from national and local governments including the tourism, environment and other administrations, private ecotourism businesses and their trade associations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and consultants, intergovernmental organizations, and indigenous and local communities:

Reaffirming the International Year of Ecotourism 2002, the World Ecotourism Summit 2002 and the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism 2002 as agreed by all parties attending the Summit

Acknowledging that in spite of the Declaration and the overall consensus reached during 2002, the term “ecotourism” is still being misused and abused as a mere marketing and promotional tool by many companies and destinations, without any sense of responsibility or respect towards the natural and human environments

Recognising the limitations of this consultative process to incorporate the input of all developing countries, including representatives from 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)

In light of the above, the participants of the World Ecotourism Conference, having met in Vientiane, Lao PDR from 15 to 17 July 2009, produced a Visionary Statement:

To mainstream sustainable tourism principles, processes and practices into all aspects of tourism initiatives, management, development, interpretation, programs, plans, policies, projects, proposals, propositions, strategies, systems and undertakings to meet the challenges of the Energy-Climate Era, while respecting geo-cultural and civilised heritage, shall also responsibly include and express values of localization and cultural differences.

Supported by a series of affirmative actions to be disseminated to all member countries of UNWTO:-

Synergies and Partnerships

Committing to adaptive synergies and private-public sector partnerships in meeting the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals

Measuring the Value of Tourism Products and Services

Identifying and adopting value chain analysis and other acceptable forms of evaluation to measure the value of private sector tourism products and services in meeting the triple bottom line objectives while remaining commercially competitive.

Capacity Building and Role of Academia

Strengthening tourism human resources through education and training, with special focus on youth and women and recognizing the important role of academia in incorporating sustainable principles and ideology in tourism education curriculum.

Inception of Asia Pacific Ecotourism Society

Building a framework and common platform for the Asia Pacific region to develop and nurture leadership among ecotourism players and stakeholders, particularly in the developing countries as well as to foster private-public-people partnerships in delivering the action plans and achieving the vision and goals set forth by the World Ecotourism Conference in Vientiane.

Vientiane, 17th July 2009