

**Final Summary Report of the Network of ASEAN-China Think Tanks Working
Group Meeting (NACT Working Group Meeting) on Promoting People-to-People
Exchange between ASEAN and China**

“Tourism Cooperation”

Co-organized by Institute of Foreign Affairs and China Foreign Affairs University

06 June 2017, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR

Introduction

1. The Network of ASEAN-China Think Tanks Working Group Meeting (NACT Working Group Meeting) was held on 06 June 2017 in Vientiane Capital, Lao People’s Democratic Republic. The meeting was attended by senior experts, academics, scholars, researchers, and think-tankers from Cambodia, Brunei, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and China.

Opening Remarks

2. Opening remarks by Amb. ThiengBoupha, Director General of the Institute of Foreign Affairs, NACT Laos, and Ms. Yang Yue, Associate Professor, China Foreign Affairs University, NACT China.
3. Amb. ThiengBoupha expressed his sincere thanks to China Foreign Affairs University as well as participants of the NACT Working Group Meeting who participate in the meeting under the theme of “Tourism Cooperation” for the efforts and dynamic contribution in supporting this meeting. His deepest appreciation goes to distinguished panelists, colleagues and friends whose presence reflects the significant contribution of this event. He highlighted that ASEAN countries and China are close neighbors connected and bound by geographic affinity, mountains, rivers, and sea. Similar rich cultures and customs, a long history of friendly exchanges and geographical proximity have brought ASEAN countries and China close to each other. With many senior experts, academics, scholars and think-tankers from various well-known institutions from ASEAN nations and China, he wished that the presentations and discussions could help participants explore the ways to well tackle remaining challenges. The fruitful results of the meeting made can provide practical and feasible key recommendations to further promote people-to-people exchanges between ASEAN and China through tourism cooperation as well as to provide stronger intellectual support to deepen the strategic partnership.
4. Associate Professor Yang Yue highlighted that she extends her warm welcome and cordial greetings to all friends from ASEAN countries and China and thanks all the scholars and practitioners for their presence at the meeting. Her thanks also go to the Institute of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR for elaborate preparations and thoughtful arrangements with tireless efforts. The Network of ASEAN-China Think Tanks (NACT) was proposed in 2013, and officially launched in 2014. Within just more than three years, significant progress has been made in NACT mechanism building. So far a three-level working mechanism including Country Coordinators’ Meeting, Working Group Meeting and Annual Conference have been built, in a solid

manner among which Working Group Meeting is a spotlight featuring real results high efficiency and demonstrating the unique role of Track II. In order to implement the important initiative of “building people-to-people exchanges as a new pillar of ASEAN-China relations,” proposed by Premier Li Keqiang at the 19th China-ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting, NACT China, NACT Laos, and NACT Singapore jointly host Working Group Meeting on Promoting People-to-People Exchanges between ASEAN and China this year, with the focus on cultural cooperation, tourism cooperation, and education tourism respectively. And she wished the meeting a great success.

Agenda Item I: Achievements and challenges on tourism cooperation between ASEAN and China

5. This session was moderated by Dr. LattanaThavonesouk, Deputy Director General of the Institute of Foreign Affairs, Laos.
6. Dr. Lim Tai Wei, Adjunct Researcher, the East Asian Institute (EAI), National University of Singapore pointed out that tourism is a form of people-to-people connectivity. The concept of people-to-people connectivity is the idea of a common consciousness of shared heritage and culture. Conceptually, education, culture and tourism form the three legs of this idea of common consciousness amongst ASEAN people. People-to-people connectivity is the ‘soft’ component of the hardware behind ASEAN connectivity. The ‘hard’ aspects of ASEAN connectivity include building physical infrastructures and formulating institutional arrangements like free trade agreements (FTAs). He concluded that the Chinese tourism industry’s cooperation with ASEAN is constantly searching for new trends in the industry (including eco-tourism), spotting ways of supporting sustainable development, promoting responsible and ethical coexistence between humankind and Mother Nature and maximizing the power of digital technologies to create awareness and promote tourism in the region.
7. Mr. Jin Tao, Research Analyst, Department of Planning and Finance, China National Tourism Administration underlined that the world shares China’s tourism development dividends. China will also learn the successful experience in the world and share the tourism development dividends with the world. “Belt and Road” initiative is a platform to share global tourism development experience, promote international tourism cooperation as well as the integration of regional cooperation, and promote the balanced and sustainable global tourism development, creating a big international platform for international tourism development.
8. Mr. KhomDuangchantha, Deputy Director General, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR elaborated that tourism is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing economic sectors. Tourism, which is a key instrument for global growth development and job creation, plays a significant role in the process of the national socio-economic development. Therefore, it is a great opportunity for all participants, tourism experts, tourism institutions, and all stakeholders to exchange experiences, share views and lessons learned on tourism cooperation between ASEAN and China.
9. The meeting also discussed the tourism hospitality, travelling programs, visa free and guides for Chinese tourists and shopping trends of Chinese tourists, minimum

standard of professional tourism trainers and tourism collaboration between China and ASEAN under the One Belt-One Road (OBOR).

Agenda Item II: Building integrated tourist sites and ensuring sustainable tourism development

10. This session was moderated by Mr. Li Fujian, Research Fellow, China Foreign Affairs University, China.
11. Mrs. PhonemalyInthaphom, Deputy Director General, Department of Tourism Development, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR noted that building integrated tourist sites and ensuring sustainable tourism development are considered vital in Laos. The Lao government has a policy in place to promote tourism and considers the tourism sector as having a high potential in contributing to the economic growth of the country. The tourism sector is one of the fourteen (14) national priorities for 2017 to implement the National Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2016-2020, which covers SDGs. The government improves visa policies to boost regional and international tourists as well as to strengthen public, private and local people cooperation to enhance sustainable tourism development. In addition, she focuses on the highlight of tourism development plan which covers all important tourism products development around the country (northern, central and southern provinces). The plan will improve the infrastructure that links between the provinces and neighboring countries.
12. Ms. Yong Ee Chin, Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia thanked and congratulated the organizers for the strong commitment and concerted efforts in advancing the NACT Working Group meeting on promoting People-to-People Exchanges between ASEAN and China. This meeting is indeed timely, especially with the launching of 2017 ASEAN-China Year of Tourism Cooperation on 16 March 2017 in Manila, Philippines. ASEAN and China has experienced significant growth of tourism exchange where the tourist arrivals from China have recorded an increase of 6.4% to 19.8 million, while ASEAN tourists to China recorded an increase of 57.8% to 10.34 million compared to 2015. Hence, it is vital to further boost the two-way traffic and in moving this region towards a sustainable, inclusive and quality tourism. To ensure the sustainable development, Malaysia has formulated the National Ecotourism Plan (2016-2025) which embodies the spirit of the theme, uplifting communities, opportunities and economies. The presentation also focuses on the Homestay program that encouraged the involvement of local communities in tourism activities; the significance of conservation and preservation of cultural heritage in heightening the sustainable tourism and marketing and promotion. She has also suggested that ASEAN and China can cooperate through the development and promotion of ASEAN + 1 (China) packages such as Homestay packages to help boost the rural tourism of both sides. Malaysia has invited the participants to attend the UNWTO 6th Global Summit on Urban Tourism (6th GSUT) on 4 – 6 December 2017 in Kuala Lumpur, which will be the first Asian city to host this conference.
13. Dr. Ngo Duy Ngo, Senior Researcher Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, Vietnam underlined that tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries and is a major source of income for many countries. Being a people-oriented industry,

tourism also provides many jobs which have helped revitalize local economies. Sustainable tourism is defined as “tourism that respects both local people and the traveler, cultural heritage and the environment” (UNESCO). With its well-preserved cultural diversity and intact natural habitats, Vietnam has become a popular tourist destination among outdoor enthusiasts. Each year, millions visit the country to experience the picturesque coastlines, wildlife-filled forests and serene mountains with breathtaking peak-top views, and whether the guests realize it or not, their presence has a direct impact on the country.

14. The meeting also discussed the tourism development plan, duty and visa free, tourism activities and workshops with neighboring countries, especially for CLV, CLMV, CLMTV as well as the ASEAN-China tourism cooperation framework. It is also recommended to create tourism cooperation mechanism among ASEAN and ASEAN-China for clearly mutual commitment and responsibility.

Agenda Item III: Aligning the existing regional initiative on tourism between ASEAN and China to promote the implementation of the ASEAN tourism strategic plan 2016-2025

15. This session was moderated by Dr. Ngo Duy Ngo, Senior Researcher Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, Vietnam.
16. Mr. NuchRamo, Research Fellow, Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP), Cambodia commented that beside regional security and economic integration, tourism cooperation is also viewed as a key factor to strengthen people-to-people relations across the region and beyond. Following ASEAN Socio-culture community, tourism cooperation is constructing good connectivity between individuals as well as both public and private institutions. Individual exchanges can improve mutual understanding to reduce any tension among members. With regard to relations between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and People’s Republic of China. He voiced that the Cambodian government considers tourism as a significant field that not only contributes to economic growth but also builds good relations with partner countries.
17. Ms. Ma. Christina G. Aquino, Executive Director for Planning and Development/Tourism Industry Board Foundation, Inc., the Philippines hosted the launching the 2017 ASEAN-China Year of Tourism Cooperation. This will enhance cooperation with a view of increasing two-way tourist visits between ASEAN Member States and China, as well as promoting greater people-to-people exchanges between ASEAN and China. There was a significant growth of tourism exchange between ASEAN and China in 2016, with a 6.4 per cent increase or 19.8 million arrivals from China to ASEAN as compared to 2015.

As part of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 Vision that is committed to responsible, sustainable, inclusive and balanced tourism development, and to contribute significantly to the socioeconomic well-being of ASEAN people, there are two strategic directions: the first is to enhance the competitiveness of ASEAN as a single tourism destination, and the second is to ensure that ASEAN tourism is sustainable and inclusive. Of interest is the fourth of seven strategic actions which is: Raise Capacity and Capability of Tourism Human Capital which includes two

activities: Continue the implementation of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) and prepare and implement the ASEAN tourism human resources development plan in coordination with the ASEAN Tourism Resources Management (ATRM) and development network. Learning from the experience of ASEAN in implementing the ASEAN MRA for Tourism Professionals, she shared some best practices in the various lead agencies needed to be formed, the Common ASEAN Tourism curriculum and the Toolboxes to support the learning of the competencies.

18. Ms. Lin Mei, Associate Professor, School of International Relations, Xiamen University, China focused on features, competitiveness, tourism cooperation, and bright future between Indonesia and China. Indonesia prioritized tourism as one of five key industries including infrastructure, maritime economy, food security, energy and tourism since 2014 by Indonesian government, while China includes different kinds of tourism promotion activities in Indonesia by many Chinese provincial governments and China's tourism bureau. Both sides are promoting connection of strategies between 21st century silk maritime road by China and global maritime axis by Indonesia.
19. Ms. Daw Than ThanHtay, Member, Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Myanmar ISIS), Myanmar accentuated that in order to gain achievements of past 2015 ASEAN Vision and challenges facing the development of tourism in ASEAN, we realized that we need to take a more strategic approach to address ASEAN as a competitive, sustainable, and more socio-economically inclusive and integrated tourism destination. ASEAN is a highly competitive destination offering a unique, diverse, strong commitment to a culture of responsible, sustainable, balanced and inclusive tourism development.
20. The meeting also discussed ASEAN tourism marketing strategic plan, activities, middle and high class-Chinese tourists, tourism collaboration studies and concessional loans for tourism infrastructure.

Agenda Item IV: Dimension of tourist cooperation that can help expedite regional integration.

21. This session was moderated by Ms. Ma. Christina G. Aquino, Executive Director for Planning and Development/Tourism Industry Board Foundation, Inc., the Philippines.
22. Dr. RungnaphaKhamung, Instructor, International Hospitality and Tourism Management Program, Burapha University International College, Thailand highlighted that in 2016, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China experienced significant growth of tourism exchange. The total number of tourist arrivals from China to ASEAN was 19.8 million, an increase of 6.4% compared to 2015, while the number of ASEAN tourists to China recorded 10.34 million, an increase of 57.8 %. With the ASEAN- China Year of Tourism Cooperation, two-way traffic would be further boosted, as there would be more events and activities, such as promotion campaigns, family trips, press trips and joint booths at travel marts organized in both ASEAN Member States and China. She summarized that the word "inclusive" refers to the concept of "social inclusion."

This is the opposite of the exclusion found in stereotyping, pity as a substitute for justice, and outright discrimination. Inclusive tourism is the systematic application of universal design by the travel and hospitality industry at every stage of its product, service, and policy life cycle.

23. Mr. Michael Tay, Senior Deputy Director, Tourism Malaysia noted that the cultural exchange between Malaysia and China supports China's OBOR initiative. With tourism facilitation and assistance, Malaysia invites China travel agents to join in farm trip to Malaysia and connect them with local industry players through B2B Meeting. Tourism Malaysia provides assistance to film crew that want to do destination filming in Malaysia by getting the permit from relevant ministries.
24. Mrs. Sitidaulah Khoiriati, Senior Researcher, ASEAN studies Centre and Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Gadjahmada University, Indonesia mentioned that Indonesia promotes transnational network in Halal tourism in ASEAN. A number of definitions concerning halal tourism in the literature among others are focusing on the value (the implementation of Islamic principle), and focusing practices (market principle: providing halal foods for Muslims). In her views, business and tourism industry tend to develop the market-principle aspects of halal tourism by developing Muslim friendly tourism, which is: tourism that provides the needs of Muslim travelers; tourism that provides Muslim tourist halal foods. Moreover, she highlighted the global trend in halal tourism, Muslim-market tourism, milestone in ASEAN tourism, potentials of halal tourism for ASEAN.
25. The meeting also discussed the tourism problems, certain attractions for Chinese tourists, tourism credit hospitality and reasons for Chinese tourists' visit to Thailand more than Malaysia.

Recommendations

26. The WG stressed the importance of tourism cooperation between ASEAN and China. With this focus in mind, the WG made the following recommendations to further promote tourism cooperation:
 - (a). Build solid foundations for Public-Private Partnership in response to the current needs in tourism promotion.
 - (b). Strengthen ASEAN-China land and sea connectivity to facilitate tourists' traveling.
 - (c). Explore the approaches for promoting sustainable and inclusive tourism.
 - (d). Upgrade the service quality and protect the rights of visitors by strengthening regulations on tourism sectors.
 - (e). Jointly publish a code of conduct for tourists to encourage good manners.
 - (f). Increase the access to tourism training in the region to help tourism practitioners to obtain certificates according to harmonized regional standards.

Acknowledgements

Co-chairs respectively addressed that the meeting is concluded successfully. The discussions, presentations and views shared are very informative and constructive for ASEAN-China tourism cooperation. They also expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation to the distinguished participants, the organizers and China Foreign Affairs

University for making the Network of ASEAN-China Think Tanks Working Group Meeting successful.

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