

DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE WTO COMMISSION FOR EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
AT ITS FORTY FIRST MEETING

Siem Reap, Cambodia, 7 June 2004

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WTO COMMISSION FOR EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Forty-first Meeting

Siem Reap, Cambodia

07 June 2004

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Communication of the Chairman
3. Preliminary remarks of the Secretary-General
4. Tourism market trends in East Asia and the Pacific for 2003
5. Role of the Regional Commissions in:
 - a- The development of regional agendas
 - b- The preparation, implementation and evaluation of the general programme of work
 - c- The implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism
6. Regional activities
7. Preparation of the general programme of work for 2006-2007: Identification of strategic priority issues
8. Formulation of a regional project for the Emerald Triangle
9. Other matters
10. Place and date of the forty-second meeting of the Commission

PREAMBLE

1. The 41st meeting of the WTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific was held in Siem Reap, Cambodia on 7 June 2004, at the invitation of the Royal Government of Cambodia. In conjunction with the meeting, a WTO Technical Seminar on Cultural Tourism and Poverty Alleviation was also held on 8 June 2004, which was graciously inaugurated by H.E. Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia.
 2. The 41st meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Veng Sereyvuth, Senior Minister, Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia in his capacity as Chairman of the WTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific.
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DECISIONS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Agenda item 1 (document CAP/41/Prov.Agenda.)

3. After reviewing the provisional agenda and upon the proposal of the Secretariat, the Commission agreed to add a new agenda item (9) entitled "Other matters".
 4. The provisional agenda was **adopted** with this modification and the final agenda of the meeting is located on page 2.
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COMMUNICATION OF THE CHAIRMAN

Agenda item 2 (document CAP/41/2)

5. In his Communication, the Chairman stated that in their efforts to counter the recent negative effects posed by the threats of war, terrorism and virus, Member States are increasingly recognizing the importance of increasing regional and sub-regional cooperation. He said that crises often represents opportunities, calling upon the participants to work together and come up with collective strategies and action plans in response to future threats to tourism.
 6. The Chairman recalled the transformation of WTO into a UN specialized agency, which would certainly enhance the status of the tourism industry as an engine for socio-economic growth.
 7. The Chairman went on to praise the efforts of the Commission in developing various regional activities and requested that WTO organize more technical seminars and workshops in the region in order to provide opportunities to exchange ideas among the member States.
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PRELIMINARY REMARKS OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Agenda item 3 (document CAP/41/3)

8. The Secretary-General informed the Commission about the situation of world tourism and stated that in the last three years, the world tourism industry has been adversely affected by successive negative factors of war, terrorism and virus, but the industry has not collapsed, which once again proves its resilience in the face of crises. However, the crises have further delayed the tourism recovery and changed the tourist and industry behaviour in the various sub-sectors, especially in the field of air transport. There has been an increase in security and insurance costs on the supply side. World tourism has become more and more regionalized in the past two years due to geopolitical reasons as well as economic factors. The Secretary-General also mentioned the new challenges of the industry, which include non-tariff barriers to travel such as the proliferation of travel advisories, adoption of more restrictive visa policies or the tightening of security measures at rail stations and airports. He concluded his first part of the remarks by stating his confidence in the tourism industry's capacity to bounce back and grow in 2004; and especially from now onwards, with WTO becoming a UN specialized agency, tourism will be treated on an equal footing with other major activities of humanity.

9. The second part of the Secretary-General's remarks detailed the main developments that have influenced the Organization and shaped its activities since the Commission's last meeting. Due to the increased volume and diversity of the WTO activities, the Secretary-General carried out a recent restructuring of the Secretariat by establishing a Technical Cooperation Service. He informed the Commission that the Organization's activities are continuing at a sustained pace and that its finances are in good shape.

TOURISM MARKET TRENDS IN EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC FOR 2003

Agenda item 4 (document CAP/41/4)

10. The WTO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific presented a document which highlighted the main tourism trends for 2003 both on a global and a regional basis. The year of 2003 was a highly irregular one with three scourges: war in Iraq, SARS and a persistently weak economy. This situation was further compounded by the exchange rate between Euros and USD – not so much impact on volume but more on the shift of travel flow. The year saw: 694 million international tourist arrivals representing a -1.2 per cent decrease which is the third one since 1950. The year ended with an absolute increase of 6.7 million arrivals as compared with 2000. The performance pattern of world tourism last year was further confirmed by the situation in air transport where a sharp drop of traffic due to SARS was followed by a steep climb showing a typical mirror effect in tourism during crisis.

11. In 2003, Asia and the Pacific experienced a sharp drop of 9.3 per cent in terms of international tourist arrivals. Needless to say, SARS dominated the result. The region followed the

same pattern of the world in terms of concentration of intra-regional travel flow both inbound and outbound. It also followed the European region with the new entrance of low cost airlines (LCA) which will most likely shape the immediate future of the industry.

12. For the second time in a row Asia and the Pacific took over from Americas the position of the second most visited region. Within the region, Northeast Asia is still the dominating sub-region taking 58 per cent of the market share. Yet the sub-region was adversely affected by SARS, with China suffering a more serious loss of the market share. Other destinations in East Asia and the Pacific as a whole were also negatively impacted by SARS although some of these countries were not direct targets of the epidemic. The only exception on a positive note was South Asia which was almost immune to the impact. As a matter of fact India achieved an impressive +15 per cent of its international tourist arrivals. Other important destinations in South Asia like Sri Lanka and Maldives fared very well. In terms of world short term prospects for 2004, intra-regional and domestic tourism will probably still feature the tourism behaviour while the concept of value for money will persist. However, the above 4 per cent forecast of the global economy, especially in the major economies of the world such as the USA, Japan and Europe, gives confidence in the industry's ability to bounce back and grow. Even with the temporary interruption of oil prices the pent-up demand for travel is expected to be released especially in the second half of 2004.

**ROLE OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL AGENDAS;
THE PREPARATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE GENERAL PROGRAMME
OF WORK; THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL CODE OF ETHICS (ITEM 5); REGIONAL
ACTIVITIES (ITEM 6); PREPARATION OF THE GENERAL PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2006-
2007: IDENTIFICATION OF STRATEGIC PRIORITY ISSUES (ITEM 7)**

Agenda items 5, 6 & 7 (documents CAP/41/5 a,b,c; CAP/41/6; CAP/41/7)

13. With reference to Agenda item 5, the Commission was apprised of the proposed guidelines for strengthening the role of regional commissions in preparing, implementing and evaluating the Organization's general programme of work. The Commission was further informed of the activities carried out and planned in the region since its fortieth meeting held in Beijing, China in October 2003 (Agenda item 6). In addition, a brainstorming discussion on strategic priority issues was held in order to prepare for the work programme of the Organization for 2006-2007 (Agenda item 7).

14. The Chairman of the Commission, while thanking the Secretariat for the various regional activities undertaken, encouraged the Commission to continue to take the regional and sub-regional approach in the field of technical cooperation. The representative of the Philippines stated that the Asian region should be able to achieve greater successes individually and collectively by ensuring stronger and sustained cooperation in intra-regional tourism development among Asian countries. The representatives of Thailand and DPR Korea also joined the Chairman in acknowledging the efforts made by the Secretariat in this regard. The representative of Thailand in his capacity as a member of the WTO Programme Committee reported to the Commission the result of the recently held Programme Committee Meeting and expressed the need for voicing more regional opinion to the Organization on subjects like poverty alleviation, capacity-building of human resources, fair treatment

in tourism activity and tackling non-tariff barriers to travel such as proliferation of travel advisories and certification of standards.

15. During the discussions under item 5 a regional agenda was agreed upon on two priority areas – poverty alleviation and planning for sustainable tourism development at local level. In terms of future programme, the representative of Malaysia expressed the need to assist tourism SMEs in obtaining funds for projects. In this regard, WTO is requested to come up with programmes to coincide with the UN Micro-Credit Year for 2005.

FORMULATION OF A REGIONAL PROJECT FOR THE EMERALD TRIANGLE

Agenda item 8 (document CAP/41/8)

16. With reference to this item, the Commission was provided with the background information on the formulation of an Action Plan for the sustainable development of tourism in the Emerald Triangle region. The Commission fully endorsed and supported the Emerald Triangle Project document presented by the WTO Secretariat. The WTO Secretariat is requested by the Commission to submit the said document to the United Nations Development Programme to seek further funding.

OTHER MATTERS

Agenda item 9

17. The Commission thanked Dr. Harsh Varma who is now the Chief of Technical Cooperation of WTO for his years of contributions to the betterment of Asia tourism and wished him well for his new assignment. The Commission also welcomed Mr. Xu Jing, the newly appointed Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific of WTO.

18. Having heard the proposal submitted by the Indonesian delegation on TRI HITA KARANA Tourism Awards, the Commission requested the WTO Secretariat to further submit this document to the forthcoming meeting of the WTO World Committee of Ethics, to be held in October 2004, as part of the regional action to implement the Global Code of Ethics.

19. The Commission was apprised of the information on the forthcoming Travel World India which will be held in Mumbai, India in February 2005.

PLACE AND DATE OF THE 42ND MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

Agenda item 10

20. The Government of Macao SAR and the Government of Japan expressed their desire to host the 42nd meeting of the Commission for East Asia and the Pacific.
 21. The Commission decided that its 42nd meeting will be held in Shiga, Japan during the first half of 2005 at the invitation of the Government of Japan.
 22. The Commission further decided that its 44th meeting will be held in Macao SAR in 2006.
 23. It was recalled that the 43rd meeting of the Commission will be held in Senegal in 2005 within the framework of the WTO General Assembly.
 24. The Chairman closed the 41st meeting of the Commission expressing, on behalf of all the Members, his sincere thanks and appreciation to the staff of the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism as well as to the WTO Secretariat for the successful organization of the meeting.
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