Foreword

ASIA, TOURISM IN ASIA AND IN MYANMAR

In December 2012, the world celebrated its 1 billionth tourist. In 2014, there were 1.135 billion arrivals, constituting the fourth largest export industry in the world at 6% of world’s exports. This growth can be primarily attributed to the increase in industrialisation and incomes of citizens from the world’s most populous countries (e.g. China and India). And although the Asian market is the largest tourism out-bound source, it is also seen as an attractive tourism destination for its warm hospitality, unique cultural heritage, diverse natural beauty and remarkable value-for-money tourism. Myanmar, as one of the last frontiers, has felt the impact of this global trend when it opened its doors to tourism.

Myanmar, strategically located in Southeast Asia, is currently experiencing rapid growth in international tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. It has become an emerging tourist destination and was awarded ‘Best in Travel’ by Lonely Planet for 2014. Curious to explore one of the last frontiers of the world, people from all over the world have flocked to experience this mysterious golden land for themselves. In particular, tourists are drawn to the untouched culture, warm hospitality, genuine kindness and natural beauty from the snow-capped Hkakaborazi to the unspoilt white-sanded beaches and the crystal blue waters of the Myeik Archipelago. The year 2012 marked an important milestone for Myanmar as it reached over 1 million tourist arrivals. In 2013, Myanmar received 2.04 million tourists, a 93% increase from the year before, and in 2014 received 3.08 million tourists, a further 51% growth. Myanmar has also seen a sharp increase in domestic tourism - WTTC reported that total tourism expenditure from the domestic market was on par with the international market.

Tourism is a vital industry in Myanmar and is one of the seven key priority sectors as it significantly contributes to its economy and creates employment opportunities and, in turn, contributes to the alleviation of poverty. Learning from the lessons of the regional countries, Myanmar was committed to responsible tourism from the outset. That is why, in collaboration with Hanns Seidel Foundation, a Responsible Tourism Policy was developed, stating that “we intend to use tourism to make Myanmar a better place to live in – to provide more employment and greater business opportunities for all our people, to contribute to the conservation of our natural and cultural heritage and to share with us our rich diversity.” From this, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, in collaboration with Asian Development Bank and the Norwegian Government, created a Myanmar Tourism Master Plan (2013-2020) to stipulate the guidelines for responsible tourism development in Myanmar.

So far, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is implementing 12 projects, in line with the Myanmar Tourism Plan, with the technical and financial assistance of development partners. These projects cover various responsible tourism areas such as strengthening institutional frameworks, human resource development, destination management, infrastructure development and product and service quality enhancement.
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The significant political, social and economic reforms over the last few years coupled with destination diversification and the easing of travel have further facilitated tourism. With the continued promotion of peace and political stability, especially with the general election in November 2015, we anticipate even further growth in tourism and other industries. For Myanmar, this is the beginning of a long journey and it is a great time to Visit Myanmar Now. We warmly welcome those who appreciate and enjoy our heritage, our way of life and who travel with respect.

For further information about Myanmar, tourism statistics and policy handbooks please visit: www.myanmartourism.org.

*Daw KhinThan Win*

*Director for Tourism Promotion Department, Directorate of Hotels and Tourism, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar*