(Draft) Istanbul Statement on the 2nd Meeting of TOPIC

As of 11 November 2022

We, the leaders and representatives of political parties and political groups from Asia, gathered on 19 November 2022 on the sideline of the 11th General Assembly of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), which was held in Istanbul, the Republic of Türkiye, under the theme of "The Role of Political Parties in Strengthening Dialogue for Global Peace, Prosperity and Cooperation," and convened the 2nd Meeting of the Tourism Promotion and Inter-City Cooperation Council (TOPIC).

We recognized the potential that the ICAPP activities have in revitalizing the tourist industry through cooperation among political parties. We revisited the Terengganu statement adopted at the 1st Meeting of TOPIC, which focused on the roles of political parties in promoting close cooperation for sustainable and dynamic tourism; to generate human resources, job opportunities, and a spillover effect in education and healthcare; to support smart inter-city technology for an innovative tourism community, and noted that most of its recommendations remains effective to the post COVID-19 tourism industry.

We also noted that tourism is one of the industries hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the impact assessment of COVID-19 on international tourism provided by the U.N. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the total loss in tourism revenues exceeds $2 trillion for 2020 and 2021. We noted with concern that among the most affected economies were developing economies and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

We acknowledged that the rebound of international tourism would be crucial in the post-COVID-19 recovery of the world economy and global trade, and the cooperation of political parties could promote the recovery of tourism in a more sustainable and dynamic way.

In doing so, we affirmed the following three points:

1. Tourism should recover in a more environmentally sustainable way by being more mindful of climate change adaptation and protecting natural sites with better responses to biodiversity loss. Relevant sectors should strengthen tourism by advancing it in line with international climate goals, specifically the ones set out in the U.N. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In this vein, we embraced the 2022 report of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization by the General Assembly resolution, "Promotion of Sustainable Tourism, Including Ecotourism, for Poverty Eradication and Environment Protection" which emphasized the promotion of responsible, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism.

2. Tourism should be developed in a way that is more resilient to economic disruptions. COVID-19 created a collapse in tourism sectors such as hotels and transportation, whose

losses also spilled over to other relevant sectors of the local economy. Therefore, tourism should be strengthened by including risk assessment systems to better anticipate natural or health disasters and thereby design prevention plans to protect local communities and achieve a more dynamic industry.

3. The inclusiveness of tourism should be ensured by widening community engagement and benefits. Everyone should benefit from tourism's return, including indigenous communities, race, and gender minorities. In this vein, we welcomed the 2022 report from the UNWTO on Gender-inclusive Strategy for the Tourism business and the Inclusive Recovery Guidance provided by the UNWTO Ethics, Culture, and Social Responsibility Department.

We encouraged governments and political parties to advance innovation in tourism by maximizing the use of technology, including mobile and digital travel tools to promote tourism and inter-city connections. We affirmed that digital technologies in tourism could relieve the industry crisis by providing instant ticket booking and allowing customers to build their own itineraries, especially for unconventional destinations such as islands and highlands to meet the increased interest in nature-based activities after the health pandemic. We affirmed that the active use of digital technology could contribute to making tourism-dependent regions less vulnerable to economic threats.

Tourism and travel are key to promoting understanding among peoples, cultures and countries, apart from promoting economies. In this world of climate crises, eco-tourism must be encouraged with Green Tourism as the way forward.

Tourism will also get a fillip with the upcoming World Soccer Cup in Qatar, the most popular global sports event. Tourism and Sports can be important unifying factors for humanity and we wish the World Soccer Cup success, more so, as West Asia will be the venue for this 2022 mega sports event.

We noted the possibility of the recurrence of a crisis like COVID-19 and emphasized the importance of communication regarding the tourist sites that would allow industry-wide precautions to ensure a safe environment to travel and instill trust in travelers. We expressed confidence that the collective endeavor through dialogues among political parties to support safe and sustainable tourism would contribute to reactivating and further strengthening international tourism.

We expressed our profound gratitude to the Justice and Development Party (*AK Parti*) of Türkiye for their excellent preparations and warm hospitality in hosting this meeting. We also noted with great appreciation the administrative support of the ICAPP Secretariat in organizing the meeting.

Adopted unanimously on 19 November 2022 in Istanbul, Türkiye.