Press Release
29 March 2017, Yangon, Myanmar

Forum on Sustainability in Tourism and Hospitality in Myanmar

Sustainable tourism is a driver for job creation and provides long-term benefits to both the private sector and local communities. This year has been declared the “International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development” by the United Nations and it is therefore the right time to raise further awareness of this important issue in Myanmar, where tourism is growing at a very fast pace. In this context, Swisscontact, the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Institute (MRTI) and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GTSC) are jointly organising the first-ever “Forum on Sustainability in Tourism and Hospitality in Myanmar” at Novotel Yangon Max on the 29th and 30th of March 2017. This is an event for mutual learning and knowledge-sharing about sustainability in tourism. It is increasingly important that key tourism stakeholders become familiar with the GSCT Industry criteria (criteria can be browsed here: http://www.gstcouncil.org/en/gstc-criteria-hotels-tour-operators-destinations/criteria-for-hotels-tour-operators-industry.html) for sustainability and learn about good sustainability practices in the region. The event is co-financed by Novotel Yangon Max and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Myanmar.

Discussing sustainability in tourism goes beyond the implementation of green practices in hotels. Matters regarding gender equality in the workplace, women occupying management positions, as well as decent work, are cross-cutting issues that are intrinsically imbedded into discussions about sustainability.

H.E. Mr. Paul Seger, Ambassador of the Embassy of Switzerland in Myanmar and high-level official from Ministry of Hotels and Tourism attended the first day of the forum and delivered remarks to highlight the importance of the event in promoting sustainable practices in Myanmar. More than 160 representatives from hotels, officials from MoHT, key associations from the Myanmar Tourism Federation, development partners and community based stakeholders that are supporting sustainable tourism in the country joined this event. The first day of the forum was held in a conference style, where national and international experts shared their experiences and discussed the implementation of sustainability practices in their respective destinations. On the second day, GSTC-certified trainers delivered a full-day of training for hoteliers and tour operators on the GSTC criteria.

In an effort to lead by example, the organisers and the host focused on making the event as “green” as possible, minimising negative impacts on the environment. Among many other measures, the amount of paper used was minimised for the event and all the documentation, including confirmation vouchers, handouts and certificates, for the training day were sent electronically. Room temperatures and lighting are also adjusted to ensure the comfort of participants while reducing the consumption of electricity. Plastic bottles were replaced with glass decanters and participants were encouraged to bring their own mug or water flask in order to reduce waste.
The organisers hope that this event will foster networking and the increased integration of sustainable operational practices in tourism enterprises nationwide. The organisers believe that 2017 will offer a unique opportunity to move the sustainability agenda forward in Myanmar, promoting increased engagement by tourism industry stakeholders across the country.

USEFUL LINKS:
- Yangon Max Hotel
- Swisscontact Mekong
- Myanmar Responsible Tourism Institute
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) / Embassy of Switzerland in Myanmar

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