Macao Government Tourism Office

Press Release

29 May 2019

**Alexis Tam presides over Plenary Meeting of Tourism Development Committee**

The Tourism Development Committee (CDT, on its Portuguese acronym) convened the first Plenary Meeting of 2019 on 29 May, presided by Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture and Committee Chairperson, Alexis Tam.

At the meeting, Secretary Tam stated that while tourism and other related industries have produced economic benefits for Macao, continuous surge in visitor arrivals has posed other challenges for the city. Concerning the issue of tourism carrying capacity, the Special Administrative Region Government cares deeply about safeguarding the quality of residents’ life and various stakeholders’ opinions, and welcomes members of all circles to voice suggestions on the issue. The Government also embraces an open approach to the feasibility study of imposing tourist tax with a keen ear for different voices. It is worth highlighting that tax imposition is one of the various possible means/measures to tackle the issue of tourism carrying capacity. The SAR Government is vigorously looking into different possible solutions to strike a balance between the quality of residents’ life and tourism industry development, while encouraging different stakeholders to raise more valuable suggestions.

Numerous CDT members expressed their feedback and perspectives on tourist tax imposition. They expressed concerns about the objective and effectiveness of the respective policy, as well as its potential influence on the building and concerted development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Some members pointed out the close relevance between Macao’s tourism carrying capacity and its border-crossing capacity, transportation system and crowd management measures at major tourist attractions. They suggested application of an appointment system for visits to tourist attractions for management of the daily volume of visitor admissions. Another CDT member expressed the necessity of formulating short- and long-term policies to tackle the issue of tourism carrying capacity in a comprehensive way, and setting up interdepartmental task forces to put respective measures into practice in the long run.

The coordinators of the four Task Forces under the tutelage of CDT delivered their work reports which include concerns and suggestions of their committee members. Coordinator of the Task Force on Human Resources and Quality Management, Wilfred Wong, reported on human resources and employment of drivers. Coordinator of the Task Force on Tourism Policy, Planning and Regional Cooperation, Francis Lui, reported on CDT members’ concerns about tourism carrying capacity and the feasibility of tourist tax imposition, transport connectivity for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, maritime tour and suggestions following the launch of the “Hengqin International Leisure Tourism Island Construction Scheme”. Coordinator of the Task Force on Tourism Branding and Marketing, Linda Chen, reported the outcome of discussions on promotional initiatives for Art Macao and the 20th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Macao SAR, 144-hour simplified visa transit policy and multi-destination travel. Coordinator of the Task Force on Tourism Products and Events, Angela Leong, reported on Anim’Arte Nam Van, the Macao Grand Prix Museum and the Wine Museum.

A representative of Caritas Macau gave a brief presentation of the report of the second-phase survey study on accessible tourism facilities in Macao. Counselor for Inclusive and Accessible Tourism of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Kuan Kuok Lok, delivered introductory remarks prior to the report presentation of Caritas Macau. Director of Macao Government Tourism Office, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, called for industry operators, especially hotels, to refer to the respective guideline for enhancement of the accessibility of their facilities in the future. The Tourism Office has also rolled out pertinent training for awareness enhancement among industry operators.

CDT members also expressed their concerns about the Greater Bay Area tourism development particularly regarding island tourism. Some stated that discussions with Hengqin are underway about the development of island tour products.

In concluding the Meeting, Alexis Tam stated that Art Macao can foster flourishing of non-gaming elements in Macao and deliver the city’s strengths as a platform, while enhancing the cultural tastes of Macao residents and cultivating cultural attainments among youths. He also shared about the accomplishments from the Government’s two official visits to Portugal in the first half of the year, launch of the study on accessible tourism facilities in Macao and the Government’s respective anticipation. He called for the support of industry operators by putting accessible tourism into practice.

During the Meeting, government officials also shared with CDT members the SAR Government’s work in pushing forward tourism development in parallel with the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, as well as an overview of the mega project “Art Macao” in various aspects.

CDT members who expressed their opinions during the Meeting include (in order of speaking): Wong Fai, Tong Kai Chung, Melinda Chan, Francis Lui, Wilfred Wong, Linda Chen, Angela Leong, Maggie Ma, Lei Sou Ian, Fong Hio Kin, Joycelyn Wong and Leng Sai Vai.

**Photo captions:**

1. CDT Chairperson and Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, presides over the Plenary Meeting
2. CDT convenes the first Plenary Meeting of 2019
3. Alexis Tam addresses the Meeting
4. Coordinators of the Task Forces deliver the work reports
5. Coordinators of the Task Forces, Wilfred Wong, Linda Chen, Francis Lui and Angela Leong, deliver the work reports