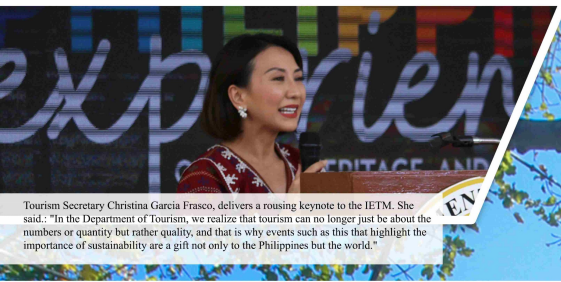


# PHILIPPINES

From the proverbial four corners of the world came vital action and planning for ecotourism as an essential mover to uplift people's lives and nurture nature amidst climate challenges. All these, through the International Ecotourism Travel Mart (IETM). The Philippines marked history when 25 nations networked, shared learnings and resources, engaged, and discovered more during the multi-faceted IETM, the world's first green travel mart, from March 29 to April 2, 2023 in Silang, Cavite.



Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, delivers a rousing keynote to the IETM. She said: "In the Department of Tourism, we realize that tourism can no longer just be about the numbers or quantity but rather quality, and that is why events such as this that highlight the importance of sustainability are a gift not only to the Philippines but the world."



Masaru Takayama, chair of the Asian Ecotourism Network, introduces the AEN to the assembly and cites its work through collaboration.



Mayor Alston Kevin Anama of Silang, Cavite welcomes guests, participants, exhibitors, sponsors and support groups to Silang which is honored to be the site of the historic international event.



Officials, AEN, ISST, and IETM heads, and delegates make a heart gesture at the close of the opening rites.



Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista highlights the vital value of incorporating sustainability in transport innovations. Dr. Mina Gabor, former tourism secretary who is chair and president of the International School of Sustainable Tourism (ISST), speaks of the sustained initiatives of the AEN and ISST in mounting the IETM before and during the pandemic, leading to this opening.



Dr. Mandita Lim, executive director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, outlines the relevance of the IETM in pushing the environment and tourism sectors in jointly shaping responsible business for a healthier planet. Waniya Phanumat, director of the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration, shares DASTA's beliefs and successes in community-based ecotourism development. Dr. Glenn Gregorio, director of the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, cites community empowerment as salient to ecotourism success.



Secretary Frasco (seated left) speaks to a Zamboanguena weaver at the DOT pavilion in a tour of the exhibits after hanging the ceremonial gong (in right photo) in the presence of Miss Earth 2022 Mina Sue Choi (rightmost), and (from left) Miss Indonesia Earth Karina Basrewan, and Miss Philippines Earth Jenny Ramp.



Together with Environment Undersecretary Ernesto Adobo Jr., Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Gary Domingo, the distinguished diplomats who graced the IETM opening were Brazil Ambassador Antonio Jose Maria de Souza E Silva, Nigeria Ambassador Folakemi Ibiidanni Akinleye, Papua New Guinea Ambassador Betty Palaso, Belarus Charge D'Affaires Anna Marie Ablan, Brazil Deputy Chief of Mission Sergio Taam, Indonesia Deputy Chief of Mission Dado Sudrajat, Libya Charge D'Affaires Mohamed M.O. Melad, Myanmar Charge D'Affaires San Yu Kwal, Panama Charge D'Affaires Xiomara Perez, Sri Lanka Charge D'Affaires P.G.P. Kaushalya, India Counsellor for Economic and Commerce Nishikanti Singh, Albania Consul Bernardo Benedicto III, Liberia Consul Eunina V. Mangio, and US Commercial Assistant Ms. Sheldina Soliman.



Winners of the AEN International Ecotourism Awards are announced during the fourth day dinner program. DOT Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso (in red and black top, leftmost of second photo, joined Takayama in awarding winners, among them being national tourism organizations, accommodation establishments, and NGOs from Taiwan, Malaysia, Jordan, Korea, Japan and the Philippines. Cited were exemplars in complying with AEN Ecotourism Standard for Accommodations and Destinations which are recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. Philippine awardees were the Ten Knots Group which garnered the Biodiversity Conservation Award and Ecotourism Promotions Award, and the Lio Tourism Estate in Palawan which got the Waste Management Award. The categories include Destination Governance, Sustainable Building, Community Benefit, Climate Action, Biodiversity Conservation, Waste Management, Ecotourism Promotion, Environment Leadership, Innovative Ecotourism, and Community Champions. Other officials present at the awarding ceremony are Dr. Gabor, Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Nograles, Oscar Barrera, Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. (PhilExport) trustee, and DOT Assistant Secretary Maria Rica Bueno.



Some 300 Ecotourism Forum participants from Asia experienced two full days of learning the A to Zs of ecotourism. DOT Undersecretary Buensuceso started the series on DOT trusts on sustainability while Dr. Gabor capped it with the topic of forming viable tour packages. Experts all over the world came to share best practices and knowledge. Cavite Rep. Lani Mercado was among highly engaged guests at the forum.



The Department of Trade and Industry's One Town One Product program (OTOP) was highlighted at the IETM, together with its initiatives in spurring SME growth through its Negosyo Center. Exhibitors designated by the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions showcased eco-products, while other regions showcased their wares.



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity featured various ASEAN Heritage Parks in its pavilion. Dr. Lim (in third photo) is shown with Dr. Gabor and Miss Earth winners during ceremonies at the pavilion. Also invited to present her artworks on nature was Samantha Kaspar (center in rightmost photo), a multi-talented Filipino Swiss artist who was diagnosed with autism at an early age. She is shown in photo with her parents.



B2B engagements and other collaborations were sparked at the IETM. Associations which came to IETM included the Thailand Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association, Japan Alliance of Responsible Travel Agencies, Taiwan Ecotourism Association, and the Jeju Ecotourism Association and Changwon Junam. Also included in photos is the booth of the Philippine Airlines, official airline of IETM. Toyota displayed hybrid cars in the green technology component of the IETM. Ford was also present as official land transport of the event.



"Embracing Authentic Ecotourism and Festival", the theme for the IETM, gained vibrance with colors and textures at the Marketplace. Unique and eco-crafted home decor, accessories, garments, espadrilles, fresh fruits and, yes, vegetables provided delight to the senses of IETM participants, guests and visiting families.



An array of cultural presentations made IETM more memorable and impactful. Silang's Salinlahi and Serenata Singers, Bacoor marching band, Himig Batingaw Choir of Imus were among presenters. Traditional weaving demonstrations were also among activities at the booths.

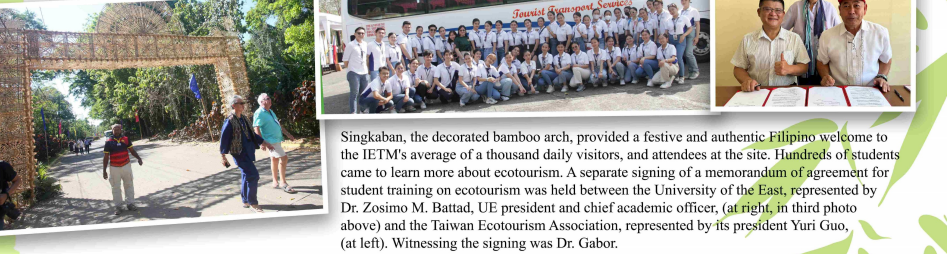


Singkaban, the decorated bamboo arch, provided a festive and authentic Filipino welcome to the IETM's average of a thousand daily visitors, and attendees at the site. Hundreds of students came to learn more about ecotourism. A separate signing of a memorandum of agreement for student training on ecotourism was held between the University of the East, represented by Dr. Zosimo M. Battad, UE president and chief academic officer, (at right, in third photo above) and the Taiwan Ecotourism Association, represented by its president Yuri Guo, (at left). Witnessing the signing was Dr. Gabor.

## SILANG, CAVITE DECLARATION ON AUTHENTIC ECOTOURISM MARKETING AND PROMOTION

All the IETM participants hereby solemnly proclaim the following Declaration on Ecotourism Marketing and Promotion to be adopted in Asia Pacific countries to combat greenwashing and to deliver genuine and authentic experiences in ecotourism; Ecotourism Marketing and Promotion must follow international good practices and guidelines, including:

- Promise only what can be delivered based on genuine and authentic experiences
- Ensure ethical interaction with wildlife and their habitats
- Respect and value both contemporary and traditional culture including their tangible and intangible heritage
- Show respect to communities including indigenous peoples in the contents that are reviewed and agreed by the communities
- Minimize negative impacts and maximize local benefits whilst providing positive visitor experiences during visits to historically and culturally sensitive sites
- Enhance understanding and awareness of stakeholders of ecotourism businesses, communities, and visitors
- Use materials produced locally and in a sustainable manner
- Ensure promotion and marketing activities are delivered in a sustainable way that minimizes greenhouse emissions
- Reduce the carbon footprint of promotion and marketing activity through management actions and/or offset based on scientific measurement of all sources of greenhouse gas emission
- Strengthen a network among ecotourism players in order to enhance effectiveness of marketing and promotion.



A Butterfly Garden with hundreds of butterfly species and Fishalan of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, which featured aquaponics, were among family treats for learning at the IETM which also saw the participation of SEARCA and the Department of Science and Technology.