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PRESS RELEASE

MATATO raises concerns on "Maldives Safe Tourism Guideline"

21 May 2020, Male': We are all reeling from the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. Unfortunately, the Tourism Industry is undoubtedly the single most affected economic sector in the Maldives, both in terms of direct financial and human resource costs, and in terms of the extenuating impacts upon other public and private sectors. The UNWTO estimates that 70-80% of the global tourist numbers will fall, further exacerbating the economic recovery efforts of destinations like the Maldives. Further, the IMF has also identified the Maldives one of the countries to be most severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important that we prepare ourselves to open our borders and have a practical approach to re-entering the global tourism market, rather than creating an approach that actively hinders an already ailing Tourism industry. On top of an unprecedented closing of tourism facilities and service providers, the proposed plan presents a deplorable devaluation of the Maldives brand, that has been cultivated over 40 years. This devaluation will have direct negative fiscal impacts in the months and years ahead. In the last two days, we have seen numerous initial negative reactions posted on international forums that have been made privy to the SOP Guideline, that paints the Maldives as unwelcoming and fundamentally inhospitable.

MATATO, as one of the key stakeholders of tourism industry in the Maldives, would like to clarify for the public that the current draft SOP "Maldives Safe Tourism Guideline" that was released 2 days ago on 19 May 2020 was not discussed with us during the drafting stage and was only shared for comments 2 days ago by the Ministry of Tourism.

As some media outlets have indicated that the SOP Guideline draft was prepared with the feedback and input of industry stakeholders, we are compelled to clarify that this is not the case and we are currently in the process of reviewing the SOP Guideline, together with our domestic and international stakeholders, to provide our feedback.

Given the severity of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that all stakeholders are consulted and allowed the opportunity to give diligent feedback, in order to effectively recover from this global crisis.

We believe that we should not depart from our 40 year history of welcoming travelers to the Maldives and we believe that a balance needs to be found to ensure that the largest revenue generating sector of the Maldives, the Tourism Industry, is not further hindered during our recovery process.

We appreciate the initiative now taken by the Government to engage in meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders of the tourism industry in order to review the drafted SOP Guideline, to facilitate the border's re-opening and the national recovery process.

End.

ABOUT MATATO

A non-profit membership organization exclusive to Maldivian travel enterprises. A diverse membership representing Tourist Resorts, Hotels Brands, Guest Houses, Airlines and other travel service providers as associate members. MATATO owns two travel publication, MALDIVES FINDER and TRAVEL AGENTS GUIDE.

MATATO is also the organizer of Maldives Travel Awards, the highest recognition in Maldives Travel Industry, established in 2011.

MATATO is also a regular exhibitor at International Travel fairs and Exhibitions in addition to hosting roadshows and creating business networks for destination marketing

Since 2018 MATATO also represents PATA Chapter Maldives.

MALDIVES CHAPTER

