

Declaration on the Start of a New Age of Tourism Exchange among Japan, China, and South Korea

First Ministerial Conference on Tourism in Four Years Held in Tokyo



Minister Kim, Minister Ohta and Chairman Li (from left to right)

The 7th Japan-China-South Korea Ministerial Conference on Tourism was held by the three countries on April 11 and 12 in Tokyo. This was the first such conference held in four years, following an interruption due to the deterioration of Japan-China relations and Japan-South Korea relations. In attendance were Akihiro Ohta, Japan's Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism, Li Jinzao, chairman of the China

National Tourism Administration, Kim Jongdeok, South Korea's Minister of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, and industry-related persons. Following bilateral talks between Japan and China, Japan and South Korea, and China and South Korea on the 11th, the three countries held a meeting on the 12th where they adopted a joint declaration that incorporated (1) the start of a new age of tourism exchange among Japan, China, and South Korea through improving the convenience of human travel, (2) advancement of the Visit East Asia Campaign (VEAC) through trilateral joint promotion, and (3) improvement of the quality of tourism exchange by strengthening collaboration among the three countries of Japan, China, and South Korea.

The population exchange among the three countries expanded from 13.84 million in 2006 when the first ministerial conference on tourism was held to 20.47 million people in 2014. The joint declaration also states the three countries will cooperate in an effort to expand exchanges with the aim of reaching 30 million people by 2020.

At a press conference held after signing of the joint declaration, Akihiro Ohta, Japan's Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, said, "The first issue is how much Japan can increase the number of travelers who go to China and South Korea," indicating his intention to place the highest priority on recovery of demand for travel to China and South Korea. Regarding VEAC, he emphasized, "This is our first attempt, and we must steadily push this joint project forward."

Li Jinzao, director of the China National Tourism Administration, pointed out that this joint declaration "goes beyond the framework of traditional tourism cooperation; its major feature is that it attempts to unify the rules and routes for tourism in the three countries." He said, "Political relationships are not necessarily always smooth; however, the level of cooperation in tourism in the past several years has risen, and we currently continue to move toward new goals." He stated his view that "no matter what sorts of political assertions are made, we must not disagree with respect to cooperation on tourism." He added, "There really should be no national barriers to tourism, and it is the responsibility of national governments to enable people to travel freely."

Kim Jongdeok, South Korea's Minister of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, stressed, "Tourism cooperation and tourism exchange are very important means to deepen friendship, and they play an important role in conflict resolution." He displayed confidence concerning VEAC, saying, "Looking at the global tourism market, our three countries could become a common destination if we endeavor to cooperate together." He stated, "If we overcome the various obstacles through joint promotion, I think that the political situation may also work in a positive way."

At the Japan-China-South Korea Tourism Exchange Expansion Forum held on the 12th, there was a panel discussion moderated by Ryoichi Matsuyama, president of the Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO). The three panelists were Hiromi Tagawa, JATA chairman, Lijun Zhang, chairman of China Association of Travel

Services, and Moo Seung Yang, Chairman of the Korean Association of Travel Agents (KATA). They confirmed the importance of continuing and expanding nongovernmental exchanges via tourism amidst the ongoing tough political climate.

Outbound Japanese Travelers Down 4.2% in March to 1.53 Million

Decline of 5.3% Overall for the First Quarter in 2015

According to a preliminary report released April 22 by the Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO), outbound Japanese travelers in March this year numbered 1.53 million, down 4.2% year on year. Although the figure has remained negative year-on-year during the three consecutive months since the beginning of the year, the percentage of decline did rebound from the 10.2% drop in February. However, the figure for outbound Japanese travelers has been negative year-on-year for ten consecutive months since last June, and there appears to be no halt to the slowdown in outbound travel demand. During the three months from January to March 2015, the number of outbound Japanese travelers was 4,027,612, a decrease of 5.3% year on year.

Meanwhile, inbound foreign travelers in March this year numbered 1,526,000, up 45.3% year on year. Since February when inbound foreign travelers surpassed the number of outbound Japanese travelers, the numbers of inbound foreign travelers and outbound Japanese travelers have been nearly the same.

The first time that the number of inbound foreign visitors surpassed 1.50 million in a single month was in March this year. Moreover, new records for a single month were set in two consecutive months, surpassing the record of 1,387,000 set in February by 139,000 in March.

By market, in addition to the single-month records set by Hong Kong, Vietnam, US, Canada, UK, and Germany, there were 19 markets excluding Russia that set new records for the month of March. These 19 markets all displayed double-digit growth, led by the Philippines which was up 110.9% year on year. Even in terms of year-on-year growth, the number of inbound foreign travelers displayed significant growth.

2015 Visitor Arrivals & Japanese Overseas Travelers (Unit: Persons)

Month	Visitor Arrivals			Japanese Overseas Travelers		
	2014	2015	Change %	2014	2015	Change %
1 Jan.	944,009 (730,519)	* 1,298,400	* 29.1	1,253,404	* 1,238,060	* -1.2
2 Feb.	880,020 (688,902)	* 1,387,000	* 57.6	1,404,873	* 1,262,000	* -10.2
3 Mar.	1,050,559 (802,434)	* 1,526,000	* 45.3	1,596,751	* 1,530,000	* -4.2
4 Apr.	1,231,471 (1,020,474)			1,189,132		
5 May.	1,097,211 (892,577)			1,280,765		
6 Jun.	1,055,273 (866,883)			1,289,029		
1~6 Jan.-Jun.	6,258,543 (5,001,789)			8,013,954		
7 Jul.	1,270,048 (1,080,552)			1,414,912		
8 Aug.	1,109,569 (903,919)			1,783,127		
9 Sep.	1,099,102 (846,241)			1,520,863		
10 Oct.	1,271,705 (1,029,922)			1,417,766		
11 Nov.	1,168,427			1,355,246		
12 Dec.	* 1,236,073			* 1,397,520		
1~3 Jan.-Mar.	* 2,874,588 (2,221,855)	* 4,131,400	* 43.7	4,255,028	* 4,027,600	* -5.3
1~12 Jan.-Dec.	13,413,467 (10,880,604)			16,903,388		

◆Note 1. The figures for Jan.-Nov.2014 are provisional, while * stands for the preliminary figures estimated by JNTO.

◆Note 2. Provisional and definitive figures for Visitor Arrivals are compiled by JNTO (source: Ministry of Justice), and provisional and definitive figures for Japanese Overseas Travelers are provided by the Ministry of Justice.

◆Note 3. The figures in () represent the number of tourists among the total.