

## REVIEW OF JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY - CONCLUSIONS

Tourism is expanding in Japan since the beginning of the 60s, benefiting from the rapid economic development experienced by the Asian countries. The Island has many historical, natural and man-made assets. For Japanese travellers, family-trips remain a main purpose of visit. City and congress-centred tourism has gained considerably in importance in recent years. The contribution of tourism to the overall economy is equal to leading industries such as automobile, with a high impact on employment. The ratio of tourism consumption by foreign visitors compared to total tourism consumption remains very small compared to other countries.

In 2000, tourism industry accounted for about 2.2% of GDP. In 2001, international travel receipts totalled USD 5.6 billion. Japan is ranked number 4 in the world in terms of international travel expenditure with USD 34.4 billion. In 2001, the number of inbound visitors recorded 4.77 million (0.3% compared to previous year) while the number of Japanese travelling abroad fell by 9% to 16.2 million, due to the adverse effects of the terrorists attacks in the United States.

The imbalance between outbound and inbound tourism is an unfavourable situation for the development of tourism in Japan. It is against this background that the OECD Tourism Committee reviewed Japan's tourism policy, programmes and instruments on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2002.

Amongst the new orientations and reforms implemented in recent years by tourism policy in Japan, the Tourism Committee noted:

- The **setting-up in January 2001 of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT)** in which tourism policy operates. This structure strengthens the linkages between tourism policy and infrastructure, regional development and transport policies and fosters tourism policy as a growth-oriented economic policy, with an increased emphasis on leisure and enjoyment of life. Greater awareness is given to tourism by the government as a key industry in the national economy, contributing to regional development and mutual understanding.
- The **proposed reform of the Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO)** to be undertaken in 2003 and its transformation in a "independent administrative corporation", with reforms aiming to increase the transparency of management, the efficiency of business administration and accountability of performance. JNTO (see [www.jnto.go.jp](http://www.jnto.go.jp)) is owned 100% by the government. This reform may generate significant savings for the government.
- The **launching of a new vision for regional development** - tourism based community development as a tourism policy instrument to guide local tourism destinations to develop a sustainable tourism policy in which the community serves as the principal player in tourism promotion. This programme aims to rejuvenate the tourism products and to fight against the progressive degradation of resources.

- The **significant efforts to increase consecutive holiday** and realise the “structural change of Japanese lifestyle”. Tourism has the potential to contribute to social stability and can provide people with a different perspective of life, interacting with natural and human environments. In 2001, Japanese travellers used on average about 9 paid holidays. This programme can contribute to a better quality of life of Japanese people and to a revitalisation of the economy through the increase in personal consumption.

The Tourism Committee did note, however, that a number of problems remained and that reforms should be pursued and, in some cases, amplified in scope. The Tourism Committee invites Japan to:

- Keep up its efforts to enhance the structure and quality of tourism services and products, and to adapt them to the new competitive environment.
- **Undertake further efforts in research and development** with, for example, the launching of Japan’s tourism satellite account, the development of sustainable tourism indicators or the introduction of tourism forecasts. These tools could provide critical information to guide and control tourism development and sustainability, at a time when the government is focusing on increasing significantly internal tourism (inbound and domestic).
- Undertake in due course, an in-depth **evaluation of the implementation of the tourism based community development programme** with a view to providing feedback on lessons learned and prolonging the initiative.
- **Expand its actions towards the development of public-private partnerships** in the field of tourism policy development and commercialisation of the tourism product, for example in the context of the reform of JNTO. Private-public partnerships can ensure that all measures and actions undertaken by the public authorities are market-orientated.