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## PRESS RELEASE

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**Press inquiries:**

Hal Lipper, USAID, (66-8) 9204-8725

E-mail: [hlipper@usaid.gov](mailto:hlipper@usaid.gov)

Website: [www.usaid.gov/rdma/](http://www.usaid.gov/rdma/)

Ken Scott, ScottAsia Communications,  
(66-8) 1931-2753

E-mail: [ken@scottasia.net](mailto:ken@scottasia.net)

### **NEW SOUTHEAST ASIA META-SEARCH SITE TO BENEFIT TRAVEL SUPPLIERS**

**BANGKOK** – A high-tech travel website, SoutheastAsia.org, will serve as the anchor for a new destination marketing campaign for Southeast Asia.

When launched on January 25, 2010 the site will allow users to research, plan, and book multiple-destination trips to and within the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It will also have a special section for travel agents and others in the travel trade. Travel suppliers are being encouraged to submit content now.

SoutheastAsia.org is the product of a three-way alliance signed December 9 between Singapore-based Wego Pte. Ltd., the ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA), and the Bangkok-based ASEAN Competitiveness Enhancement (ACE) Project.

The ACE Project is funded by United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Regional Development Mission Asia. ACE aims to help ASEAN enhance the integration and competitiveness of its travel and tourism sectors.

"One of our strategies for enhancing the competitiveness of ASEAN tourism is to encourage more travel suppliers to participate online to take better advantage of regional integration and marketing efforts," said ACE Project Director, R. J. Gurley.

SoutheastAsia.org will feature a content-rich, meta-search capability that will search dozens of sites before presenting results integrated into an interactive map and trip planner. The trip planner is being developed by Wego.com based on its existing meta-search technology.

"The trip planner will draw upon the great variety of bookable flights, hotels and innovative itineraries that are available in the region," said Wego's CEO, Martin Symes.

"Wego is arguably Asia Pacific's leading travel meta-search company with the broadest range of Southeast Asian content," Symes added. "With Wego's distribution channel and supplier-neutral business model, our technology is perfectly suited to serve a multi-stakeholder project such as this."

Wego and ACE will share the trip planner's development and integration costs. ACE will cover the website's development outlay. Wego will host and maintain SoutheastAsia.org on its state-of-the-art servers. Wego and ASEANTA will share the revenues generated by the trip planner.



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SoutheastAsia.org is also part of a new strategy designed to showcase the wide variety of travel options available in Southeast Asia, while also helping to raise global awareness of “ASEAN” as a community of nations.

The website targets international tourists, especially adventurous culture seekers, special-interest travelers, and cruise enthusiasts. It will offer themed feature articles, events, and points-of-interest content, as well as provide a forum for user-generated content, such as travel tips, trip anecdotes, photos and videos.

“We want SoutheastAsia.org to be the new go-to site of choice for anyone interested in travel to Southeast Asia,” said Felix Cruz, ASEANTA’s Chairman and Vice President of Marketing Support for Philippine Airlines. “It is part of our strategy to raise awareness of ‘Southeast Asia’ as a desirable regional destination relative to ‘Europe,’ ‘the South Pacific,’ and ‘the Caribbean’.”

Much of the content on SoutheastAsia.org is being built around niche themes such as ecotourism, train travel, cultural sightseeing, and cruising. “Visitors will be able to research, plan and book experiences ranging from stays in village guest houses, trekking and mountain biking in the hills, all the way to pampering in luxury beach resorts and spas,” Gurley said.

SoutheastAsia.org will have a soft launch during the ASEAN Tourism Forum, which will take place in Brunei, January 21-28, 2010. During the event, partners will announce a new destination marketing brand and campaign agreement designed to further encourage travelers to visit multiple Southeast Asian destinations, stay longer, and spend more money in the region.

#### END ####

**For editors:** Images of Felix Cruz, RJ Gurley, Martin Symes and Southeast Asian destinations can be downloaded [here](#).

#### **About ASEAN Competitiveness Enhancement (ACE)**

ACE was designed and funded by USAID's Regional Development Mission in Asia (RDMA), which is based in Bangkok. ACE's objective is to enhance the integration and competitiveness imperatives of two of ASEAN's priority sectors: travel & tourism and textiles & apparel. The ACE Project is part of the broader ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership which was launched in 2006, under which the United States pledged its support to ASEAN in pursuing its objective of becoming an ASEAN Community by 2015. The ACE Project is managed by Nathan Associates Inc. E-mail: [rjgurley@ace-advance.com](mailto:rjgurley@ace-advance.com). Website: [www.ace-advance.com](http://www.ace-advance.com).

#### **About the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)**

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency that provides economic, development and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign policy goals of the United States. The Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) was established in Bangkok in 2003 to manage bilateral USAID programs in Asian countries without USAID Missions, such as Burma, China, Laos, and Thailand. Its role has broadened to address regional and transnational issues, and its programs now cover most of Asia. The Mission’s regional approach to development projects provides a cost-effective way to



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manage services and programs. It strengthens regional institutions and helps to engage regional and international partners. More about [USAID](#).

#### **About the ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA)**

The ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA) was formed on 27th March 1971. ASEANTA is a non-profit tourism association comprising both public and private tourism sector organizations from ASEAN. ASEANTA has grown to become a tourism association of influence within the ASEAN tourism landscape, playing an integral role in shaping tourism development growth and policies in the ASEAN region. Further information and [ASEANTA mission statement](#).

#### **About Wego.com**

Wego.com allows travelers to search for flights, hotels, packages, travel deals and travel research across 100+ travel websites in the time that it normally takes to search just one. Wego searches travel websites in real-time so that the latest pricing and availability are shown. Travelers are then linked through to partner websites to book. Wego.com was founded in 2005 by former executives from Intercontinental Hotels Group (NYSE: IHG), Yahoo! (NASDAQ: YHOO), Priceline (NASDAQ: PCLN) and ZUJI. News Digital Media, the Australian digital arm of News Limited and part of News Corp (NYSE: NWS), is an investor. For more information, please visit <http://www.wego.com/about>.

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