



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **NORTH SUMATRA FIELD TRIP BRINGS RESULTS**

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Following the June meeting of the Board and Advisors of the South-East Asian Tourism Organisation (SEATO) held in Jakarta, the Board of Management and Advisors undertook a field trip to North Sumatra.

The field trip was held to look at the first major project area for the group and a number of potential partners were presented to the group making the a great success the organisation's Secretariat Director, Mr Robert Johnston said.

"We were able to visit tourism product at Parapat, Lake Toba, Bukit Lawang and Brestagi," Mr Johnston said.

"Having the support of the local authorities and their sponsorship in setting up meetings with the local industry and this brought out a number of new ideas," he said.

"I think it is safe to say that the SEATO aims meshed very well with those of the local bodies and the concept of bringing the benefits of tourism out of the hands of large organisations and into the local villages and communities of North Sumatra certainly gained a lot of support in the region.

"Traditionally tourism has played such an important part in the economic development of this region of Indonesia. The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) however saw a downturn in the number of international visitors to the region and this has led to severe difficulties for operators in the region," Mr Johnston said.

Apart from meetings with the local industry and Government organisations, the Board visited a number of local tourism operators to gain a first-hand insight into the region's infrastructure.

"Our impression unanimously was that North Sumatra does have a significant product base to work from and we will listen to what the needs and wants of the local industry are and then use the enormous combined expertise of our Management Board and Advisors to develop practical solutions which take into consideration the special needs of the region," Mr Johnston said.

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