

## INTO Executive Committee, 11 May 2017

A report by Oliver Maurice on a visit to Thailand 23 April – 1 May

### 1. Background

Two meetings had taken place last year in London with a team from Thailand wishing to establish a National Trust. I was present at one of those meetings and it was subsequently agreed that I would visit Thailand to take them to the next stage.

The Siam Society, a member of INTO, is also keen to establish a National Trust and I arranged to meet them in Bangkok while there.

At COP 22 in Marrakech I met with a representative of the World Travel and Tourism Council and followed that up with a meeting at their London headquarters. INTO was subsequently invited to become a 'Supporter' of their annual Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and I was invited to attend the Annual Summit in Bangkok.

My visit was planned in order to combine all three events

### 2. Purpose

- i. To meet with an embryo organisation wishing to set up a National Trust and talk about the next stages
- ii. To meet with the Siam Society and try to get the two organisations to work together
- iii. To attend the World Travel and Tourism Council's Annual 3 day Summit incorporating their annual Tourism for Tomorrow Awards

### 3. Outcomes

#### a) *The embryo organisation.*

This is headed by a retired General, Vivat Visnuvimol, who is based in Chiang Mai to where I flew direct from Bangkok airport on arrival. He showed me around a property that he has acquired on a 15 year 'arrangement' and where he has constructed, at his own expense, an enormous Romanesque building as the proposed Thailand National Trust headquarters. In the same grounds he has also constructed a museum, an exercise and training ground and a hotel. Across the main road leading to this rural location are the Queen Sirikit Botanic Gardens which have apparently been offered to the organisation. These are visited by many thousands of visitors each year according to the General Manager, a member of the General's team, whom I met over dinner that evening at his restaurant in Chiang Mai.

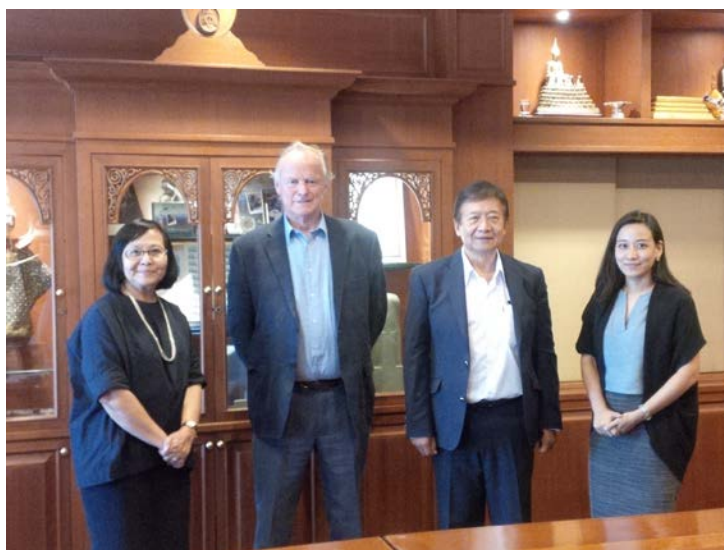


The following day, Vivat and I flew to Bangkok for a meeting at the government buildings with eight of Vivat's team including Mr Petipong Pungbun Na Ayudh, a senior politician, Member of Council of State and friend of the current Prime Minister. I outlined the work of the National Trust (EWNI) and INTO and referred to June Taboroff's 2002 Handbook, in particular the pages referring to how to

establish a Heritage Trust and what makes a successful one. I also arranged for Vivat to come to the meeting with the Siam Society 4 days later.

*b) Meeting with the Siam Society.*

This took place at their headquarters building in the centre of Bangkok where I spoke with Ms Jarunee Konghsawat and Mrs Somlak Charoenpot, the Honorary Secretary. The organisation has been in existence since 1904 and is well established. It owns an amazing collection of 50,000 books, many very rare, stored in the library on the first floor of their building. Adjacent, in the grounds, is the Kamthieng House (folk) Museum, a series of 19th century wooden buildings, which were relocated to their present site from northern Thailand and which represent a precious example of northern Thai architecture.



*L to R. Somlak Charoenpot, Hon Sec, OCM, Gen Vivat Visnuvimol, Jarunee Khongsawat, Manager Siam Society*

A useful discussion took place and we were joined by Gen. Vivat to explore the possibility of the two organisations working together as one. Nothing was resolved at the time but both agreed to follow up with the other to continue the discourse.

*iii. The World Travel and Tourism Council's Annual Summit*

This started with a 'getting to know one another' reception on 24 April for the final 15 (out of 200 applicants) potential Tourism for Tomorrow (T4T) award winners in the 5 categories: Destination; Environment; Innovation; People; Community. Also present were the sponsors, staff of the WTTC and supporters.

The winners in each category were announced during part of the Summit and it was encouraging that three of these I had already approached as potential members of INTO, two from Africa and one from Indonesia.

As a Supporter of the T4T Awards we are asked to publicise the awards and the application process through our channels and there is no doubt in my mind that INTO members could benefit from these in the future. While there is no monetary award there is the prestige and the associated publicity with being a finalist and/or winning one of the awards.

The Summit itself was extremely interesting not only for the quality and content of the various presentations, discussion groups or interviews on stage but also the networking opportunities that it provided both during the breaks and at two dinners in the evenings.

One of these was hosted by Mastercard and the Park Hyatt Hotel where it took place, at which I had previously been invited to sit at a table with 7 others to discuss the problems of over visiting with a representative from McKinsey and Co. who are due to produce a report on the topic within the next few months. I have since followed this up with further information from a number of sources.

On the last evening, a Gala dinner was hosted by the Minister of Tourism, complete with lavish entertainment featuring the best of the Thai intangible cultural heritage!

There were around 800 delegates at the summit and speakers included David Cameron; the Prime Minister of Thailand and the Minister of Tourism; cabinet ministers from other countries; Sir David

Tang; numerous Chairs and CEO's of global travel and tourism industries. The discussion groups were mostly moderated either by Stephen Sackur or Nick Ross, both well-known UK television personalities.

I came away from the Summit with a host of business cards and plenty to follow up, including possible funders for INTO and potential members.

#### 4. Conclusion

- i. There is a definite intent to form a National Trust for Thailand and it is clear that INTO's support will be needed in the process. Whether it be two organisations or one is not yet established but the hope is that they will work together as one.
- ii. The WTTC Summit was both interesting and rewarding with many useful contacts made. I would like to think that INTO might play a more formal role at a future Summit with a speaking slot on such a topic as the conservation of the cultural heritage in the face of increasing tourist pressure.

I believe that the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards could be of interest and benefit to our members and would hope that applications may be forthcoming in the future.



*Moses Muthoki ( OL Pejeta) receiving the T4T award in the Community category from Fiona Jeffery, Chair of the Awards*

Oliver Maurice May 2017