

[REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10866, June 23, 2016]

AN ACT DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF BATANES AS A RESPONSIBLE, COMMUNITY-BASED CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ECOTOURISM ZONE

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "Batanes Responsible Tourism Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State recognizes, respects, and protects the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and institutions, and considers these rights in the formulation of national plans and policies.

The State is further mandated to promote a tourism industry that is ecologically sustainable, responsible, participative, culturally sensitive, economically viable and equitable for local communities. Towards this end, the Province of Batanes is hereby declared a cultural heritage and ecotourism zone. It shall be accorded priority development by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and shall be subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of cultural heritage and ecotourism zones. The promotion of the following inherent values and characteristics which influence the uniqueness of the Ivatan culture and the beauty of the islands of Batanes shall be pursued in the development and management of the tourism industry in the Province: (a) the integrity of its ecology and environment; (b) the richness of its natural and cultural heritage; and (c) the resilience of its indigenous social institutions.

SEC. 3. *Objectives.* – Pursuant to the above declaration of policy, the State shall endeavor to accomplish the following objectives:

(a) Develop and promote responsible, community-based ecological-cultural tourism as the core management strategy in the development and growth of Batanes;

(b) Ensure the conservation of the biodiversity and the preservation of the unique heritage and culture of the Province;

(c) Develop tourism products and programs that will generate employment and livelihood for the local residents consistent with the preservation and maintenance of local heritage and culture;

(d) Guarantee that the financial and economic benefits of the tourism industry are equitably shared by, and distributed among, the Ivatans and local residents by

giving preference and support to community- and home-based tourism enterprises, such as micro and small businesses like local inns, lodges and homestays, restaurants, food and fruit stands, arts and craft shops, and similar tourism-oriented industries and businesses;

(e) Ensure that the quality of local tourism programs and activities are educational and enriching for tourists and visitors through the provision of orientation, educational and tour programs by local tour operators, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), local government units (LGUs) and the DOT; and

(f) Guarantee that in the development and promotion of the local tourism industry, the LGUs shall ensure that the needs of local residents and communities in the areas of water supply, food, energy and local construction materials are first secured and met.

SEC. 4. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

(a) *Biodiversity conservation* refers to the practice of preserving the variety of species, habitats and ecosystems, and genetic diversity of the place, including *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes which they are a part of;

(b) *Community-based tourism* refers to a form of tourism where the local community and its residents have substantial control over and involvement in the development and management of the local tourism industry and a greater proportion of the economic gains remain within the community;

(c) *Cultural property* refers to all products of human creativity by which a people and a nation reveal their identity, including churches, mosques and other places of religious worship, schools and natural history specimens and sites, whether public or privately owned, movable or immovable, and tangible or intangible;

(d) *Ecotourism* refers to a form of sustainable tourism within a natural and cultural heritage area where community participation, protection, and management of natural resources, cultural and indigenous knowledge and practices, environmental education and ethics, as well as economic benefits are fostered and pursued for the enrichment of host communities and satisfaction of visitors;

(e) *Homestay* refers to a system of tourist accommodation where a tourist stays with local residents and experience the day-to-day life of Ivatans and their communities;

(f) *Indigenous social institutions* refer to the institutions that embody the unique community orientation and cooperation pervasive in the way of life of the Ivatans. This includes the indigenous cooperative institutions in house construction, boat building and fishing, agricultural cultivation, wake and burial practices, and public infrastructure construction;

(g) *Ivatan natural and cultural heritage* refers to the landscapes, seascapes, historic places, sites and built environments of the Province precisely delineated because of their outstanding value from the point of view of science, conservation, natural beauty, as well as biodiversity; and includes past and continuing cultural practices,