



**TWENTY EIGHTH MEETING OF THE GMS TOURISM WORKING GROUP (TWG-28)
Bagan, Myanmar, 29 November 2011**

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Introduction

1. The 28th Meeting of the GMS Tourism Working Group (TWG-28) was held in Bagan, Myanmar on 29 November 2011, attended by the representatives of the National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) of the six GMS countries (Cambodia, People's Republic of China-Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam), the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO), development partners including ADB, PATA, IUCN, and Norway.

A copy of the List of Participants is in [Appendix 1](#).

Agenda Item 1: Opening Session

2. In his opening remarks, Mr. U Aung Zaw Win, Director General, Directorate of Hotels and Tourism, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MoHT) of Myanmar, welcomed all participants to TWG-28. He stated the objectives of TWG-28, i.e., to review the activities agreed upon at the previous meeting held in Pakse, Lao PDR, and to discuss new GMS projects and activities in tourism. He said that the year 2011 is very significant for Myanmar not only because of its hosting of TWG-28 and related events, but also of the 4th GMS Summit to be held in Nay Pyi Taw in December. With TWG meetings rotated alphabetically, Myanmar last hosted a TWG meeting, i.e., TWG-22, in 2008 in Nay Pyi Taw. Among several regional tourism cooperation programs (ASEAN, GMS, ACMECS, BIMSTEC, CLMV), GMS is the second important and strategic one after ASEAN, particularly in the context of TWG's strategic plans based on the Mid-term Review of the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy and Roadmap for 2011-2015. He expressed his thanks to the GMS NTOs, MTCO, PATA and other development partners for their support and declared the meeting open.

3. Mr. Craig Steffensen, Country Director, Thailand Resident Mission, Asian Development Bank, expressed his thanks to MoHT and MTCO for organizing the meeting. He underscored the commitment of TWG to promote sustainable tourism and protect the subregion's precious heritage assets, as well as the spirit of friendship and cooperation among the GMS tourism stakeholders which would help speed the recovery from the recent flooding that has negatively affected the subregion's tourism industry. He referred to the new GMS Strategic Framework covering 2012-2022 to be formally endorsed by the GMS Leaders at the 4th GMS Summit to be held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar in December 2011 and which prioritizes the development of the GMS as a single tourism destination, human resource development that supports GMS integration, and development of the GMS economic corridors. These strategic objectives are harmonized with the Refocused GMS Tourism Sector Strategy and Roadmap endorsed by the GMS Tourism Ministers. He informed TWG that a report on the refocused tourism strategy will be presented to the GMS Leaders at the 4th Summit.

4. Mr. Mason Florence, Executive Director, MTCO, expressed his thanks to the MoHT and the Myanmar Tourism Board for all the excellent arrangements for the meeting and other earlier events. He also expressed his gratitude to the Thai government for the hospitality extended to the MTCO staff during the recent flooding in Bangkok. He looked forward to working further in close coordination with the GMS NTOs and development partners.

5. Copies of the opening remarks are in Appendix 2.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda

6. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. U Aung Zaw Win of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar, and co-chaired by Mr. Craig Steffensen, Asian Development Bank.

7. The Meeting adopted the provisional agenda, copy in Appendix 3.

Agenda Item 3: Business arrangements

8. Myanmar meeting secretariat informed the participants about the arrangements for the TWG-28 meeting, lunch and farewell cocktail party hosted by the MoHT, and the Closed Meeting of the MTCO Board later in the afternoon. The TWG-28 meeting was held in plenary. Secretariat support was provided by the MTCO and the GMS Secretariat based at ADB.

Agenda Item 4: Report and follow-up of the 27th GMS Tourism Working Group Meeting and Mekong Tourism Forum 2011, 26-29 May 2011, Pakse, Lao PDR

9. Representative of Lao PDR briefed the participants on the highlights and follow-up actions on items discussed at TWG-27 held in Pakse, Lao PDR on 26-29 May 2011, as follows:

- TWG-27 reviewed the implementation of the TSS being coordinated by MTCO, particularly the progress of the (i) Marketing Program and (ii) Tourism Development Program. MTCO Executive Director gave an update on the Explore Mekong Website, GMS Tourism Events, and presented media clippings. MTCO Project Coordinator gave an update on the development program. Country representatives presented GMS Country Project Updates.
- The Mekong Tourism Forum 2011 was held on 27 – 28 May 2011, with the theme “Destination Mekong: The Making of the Star”, aimed to promote new and emerging tourist attractions. The event was well received by over 250 international and local participants. In conjunction with the MTF 2011, the Mekong Travel Fair was held at the same venue with over 80 participating booths. It was announced that Thailand would be the host for MTF 2012 and TWG-29 meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Implementation of the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy

5.1 Sub-regional Joint Marketing Program

- 5.1.1 Progress report on Explore Mekong Campaign**
- 5.1.2 Update on calendar of past/future GMS tourism events and MTCO participation**
- 5.1.3 Presentation of MTCO/Mekong media clippings**
- 5.1.4 Update on production and distribution plan of GMS map**

5.1.5 Demonstration of Mekong Responsible Tourism E-Guide and status of proposal to ASEAN-Japan Center for translation and publication of site in Japanese

5.1.6 Update on rotation scheme of future TWG meetings and Mekong Tourism Forum

10. Mr. Florence, MTCO, reported on the progress of activities related to the Explore Mekong Campaign, including the continuing production of collaterals over 3 phases between November 2010-December 2011 covering items like polo shirts, baseball caps, coffee mugs, ladies t-shirts, etc. In line with TWG's earlier suggestion, MTCO is currently exploring the sourcing of local products including tea, coffee, herbs and spices, textiles.

11. Mr. Florence reported also on MTCO's participation in several GMS and international travel fairs/marts and speaking engagements held in different venues in the region and in Europe, a few of which received sponsorship from some of the organizers. He indicated his plans to attend a number of events lined-up between December 2011-November 2012 in several venues in South and South East Asia, Europe, and the U.S., to further promote the Mekong brand, contingent on budget availability. Media clippings on tourism promotion in the Mekong were also shown. He informed the meeting that a mock-up of the GMS tourism map is being distributed to the participants and requested the NTOs to carefully review to ensure accuracy of contents; online version will also be made available. The GMS tourism map is expected to be officially launched at the 2012 Mekong Tourism Forum in June 2012 after having completed a series of reviews by GMS NTOs. MTCO is arranging to merge the websites www.mekongresponsibletourism.org and www.exploremekong.org, further update and improve the website content, and explore with potential partners including Japan ASEAN Center, France and Korea possible foreign language translation, and apply for PATA Gold and other awards. With the departure of the previous Project Coordinator, MTCO is now exploring possibilities with development partners for having the post filled up. Based on country rotation scheme, it would be Thailand's turn to host TWG-29 and 2012 Mekong Tourism Forum in June 2012, to be followed by Viet Nam to host TWG-30 in November 2012.

Discussion:

12. Chair thanked MTCO for the report and looked forward to its continued active support for TWG's program.

13. Thailand mentioned about the 24th Joint meeting of the UNWTO Commission for South Asia and the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and a UNWTO Conference technical conference scheduled for 3-5 May 2012 in Chiang Mai to which MTCO Executive Director will be invited to speak.

14. In response to Thailand's query regarding the hosting of the farewell dinner of the MTF by the incoming MTF host, Mr. Florence stated that there are no steadfast rules and that the torch passing at the farewell dinner follows the ATF model.

15. A copy of Mr. Florence's report is in [Appendix 4](#).

5.2 Implementation of Refocused GMS Tourism Sector Strategy Priority Programs

16. Representatives of NTOs presented reports on the status of implementation of projects and activities under the refocused GMS Tourism Sector Strategy's 3 priority programs, namely, tourism-related human resource development, pro-poor sustainable tourism development, and subregional marketing and product development.

5.2.1 Mekong Discovery Trail Project

17. Cambodia briefed the meeting on the Mekong Discovery Trail Project, supported by UNWTO, SNV, and Spanish government, and covering 200 km from the northeast of Cambodia to the border with Lao PDR, and the development of tourism products linked to nature and culture. The project is currently on phase 4 of 4 phases running over 4 years. SNV support is phasing out next year. To date, progress and key achievements include:

- small scale infrastructure (construction of toilets, community information centers, small piers along the Mekong river, community kitchens for home stay visitors, and transportation for tourists);
- marketing and promotion (familiarization trips for media and tour operators, publication of brochures, leaflets/pamphlets/posters, website. Number of tourist arrivals in Kratie and Stung Treng represented 30% increase over last year. Project put up a booth at GMS Travel Fair in Paske in May 2011;
- product development (production of local handicraft to support tourism, value chains analysis to assess impact on local population and other stakeholders);
- capacity building (basic skills training for local population and NGOs on hygiene, accommodation, homestay; experts from abroad also invited for training programs);
- business and investment environment (investors from Macau invited to conferences).

The project is expanding to the western part of country and looks forward to the proposed link with Lao PDR and cooperation between the two countries on Mekong dolphin watching promotion.

18. Lao PDR stated that they are still waiting for project support from UNWTO, but are currently using STDP funding to develop facilities in Siphandone wetland, and to organize dolphin watching trips at the border with Cambodia. In the future if UNWTO is forthcoming, Lao PDR can join activities with Cambodia.

5.2.2 Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management - Tourism Development in the GMS Program, Guilin, PRC, 18-29 September 2011

19. Representative of Guilin Institute of Tourism, in Guangxi (GIT), PRC, reported on the Tourism Management Course: A Deepening Learning Program organized on 17-30 September 2011 under the Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management (PPP). The program aimed to strengthen competencies to develop functional and strategic tourism interventions. Participants consisted of 24 alumni of PPP who attended previous tourism management learning programs. The program included various themes and topics on public-private partnerships, value chain analysis, cross cultural analysis, etc., and was conducted by a team of experts and guest speakers. Participants learned about issues on models of CBT, PPP partnerships, community operated ventures, and state owned enterprises in partnership with communities. Field trips, simulation exercise, team project planning, and extra-curricular activities were held. The program developed participants' ability to analyze tourism issues, broadened their appreciation of tourism site planning and management, and shared experience with counterparts from other countries. The GIT representative thanked ADB for having been given the opportunity to organize the program.

20. Co-Chair commented on the strong spirit of cooperation among the countries, grounded on their shared understanding of what needs to be done and how this could be facilitated by the TWG process.

5.2.3 Tea Caravan Trail

21. Lao PDR mentioned that the project capitalizes on the GMS North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC) through the development of a thematic travel route (covering the southern part of PRC and running through Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Thailand). Under the ADB-funded Sustainable Tourism Development Project (STDP) Part 3.A Facilitation of Tourism on NSEC, Lao PDR is developing small tourism infrastructure (tourism information centers, tourism facilities like toilets, car parking) to create

jobs for the local people and protect natural and cultural heritage. To promote the trail, Lao PDR is developing a strategy and action plan to encourage tourists to stay longer and spend more along the route from the Boten border checkpoint to Houay Xay border checkpoint through the setting up of night markets, and other CBT products, improvement of visitor experience through diversified tourism products and improved visitor infrastructure and facilities. Support is provided to local people to upgrade local products (food and handicrafts, home stays, cultural performance, tourist markets). Branding and marketing capitalize on recalled association with the ancient trade caravan. Going forward, the project will complete infrastructure at target sites and continue organizing training courses for local people, service and hospitality providers, and local producers.

22. Mr. Florence suggested the promotion of linkages between Chiang Rai and Yunnan provinces using the tea caravan trail in the context of the upcoming MTF in 2012.

5.2.4 National Eco-Tourism Workshop, Yangon, Myanmar, August 2011

23. Myanmar briefed the meeting about a National Eco-tourism Workshop held on 4-5 August 2011 in Yangon that highlighted protected areas in Myanmar. The workshop involved 17 presenters and 100 participants, and explained the priority given by the government to eco-tourism. One topic discussed was the protection of dolphins which are vital to the livelihood of fishing families but which are vulnerable to harmful and illegal fishing techniques and mercury poisoning and habitat degradation from gold mining activities. Other topics discussed were flower tourism through orchid and flora tour promotion; scenic beauty of national parks, natural beauty of caves, mangroves, trees, underwater world scenery and corals; and the way of life of sea gypsies. The workshop also discussed threats to eco-tourism, and the challenges and issues relating to inadequate staff and funding, lack of knowledge and participation of local population on ecotourism and protection of natural resources, and the need for more education and awareness programs.

24. Cambodia remarked that dolphins are unique products in the Ayeyarwady and Mekong River, and are indeed vulnerable to threats mentioned. Cambodia is trying its best to protect the dolphins, and has set up an agency just for dolphin protection, but still dolphins die due to negative practices. Tourism is one of the keys to protection and preservation of dolphins – by providing alternative livelihoods from which the fishing population can derive higher returns.

5.2.5 Mekong Tourism Forum 2012

25. Thailand reported on preparations for the Mekong Tourism Forum 2012 (MTF 2012), with the proposed theme “Protecting the Jewels of the Mekong”, scheduled on 11-14 June 2012, Dusit Island Resort Chiang Rai, in Chiang Rai, Northern Thailand. MTF 2012 will be held after the Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) scheduled on 6-8 June 2012. Chiang Rai City will celebrate its 750th anniversary in 2012. Access to Chiang Rai from Bangkok is by air via several airlines; by land (From Myanmar, delegates can cross border at Tachilek border in Shan State of Myanmar to Mae Sai border in Chiang Rai. From Lao PDR, delegates can cross border at Huayxay border in Bokeo province of Laos to Chiang Khong border in Chiang Rai). MTCO will assist Thailand in arranging the program and identifying appropriate speakers for the Forum. Tentative program includes the following activities:

Mon, 11 June 2012

STDP Meeting & Technical Tour

Tue, 12 June 2012

29th TWG Meeting & MTCO Board Meeting

Wed, 13 June 2012

MTF 2012 Day 1

Thu, 14 June 2012

MTF 2012 Day 2.

Thailand will also host a GMS Art and Culture Fair on 11 - 14 June 2012 to showcase sustainable and responsible tourism products, especially those related to arts and culture of the GMS. Each member country will be provided complimentary booth at the Fair. Thailand will also host the welcome dinner in keeping with current practice. Formal invitations will be sent later to the GMS countries; meanwhile MTCO is requested to disseminate information about the MTF 2012.

26. Mr. Florence admitted that past forums had indeed focused on trade fair and suggested a shift in focus to sustainable tourism initiatives, with interactive traditional art and cultural presentations.

27. Several comments from the floor were put forward regarding the frequency of TWG (to be held only once a year instead of twice) and GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting (to be held in conjunction with annual MTF, instead of back-to-back with the ASEAN Tourism Forum which is more multi-sector and highlights ASEAN). It was noted, however, that annual GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting coinciding with the MTF may not be feasible, for example, in the case of Thailand, as the Thai Tourism Minister is concurrently Deputy Prime Minister, and thus, very busy. Another alternative could be to organize lower-level (deputy minister level) roundtable discussion back-to-back with MTF. The meeting noted that whatever new proposal(s) TWG would agree upon should be brought to the Tourism Ministers at their next meeting for consideration and final decision.

5.2.6 Innovative Approach to PPP in Tourism HRD at Hue Tourism School

28. Viet Nam briefed the meeting about the Hue Tourism College and Tourism Training System, established in 1999, with total investments of 6 million Euros (from EU, Luxembourg grant and government contribution). The college is a comprehensive educational institution providing full time and part time programs in tourism and hospitality disciplines. It offers 3-year, 2-year, and 1-year courses on various aspects of hotel, restaurant, tour, and travel operations management, housekeeping, cookery and tour guiding. It also arranges industry placements for students, teachers' development, and research programs, and networks with similar institutions in other countries. Eight other tourism schools have been established in other tourism centers (Da Nang, Khanh Hoa, Can Tho, etc). While there is no tourism training institution at the university level in Vietnam, however, there are about 22 tourism faculties within existing universities. The Viet Nam Tourism Certification Board was established to issue National Tourism Certificates to students/learners. Several recommendations were put forward including: sharing of tourism curricula and standards; exchange visits of tourism schools/colleges, tourism facilities/assessment centers (this can be done during training course for officials in protected areas which will be organized by STDP Vietnam in 2012); establishment of a Tourism Training Association (TTA) for GMS (for exchange of teachers, teaching methodology, and training programs), and for possible expansion as GMS TTA + 3 (Europe, USA and Japan), with MTCO serving as GMS TTA's coordinator. The proposed establishment of the GMS TTA/GMS TTA + 3 is seen to help GMS countries maximize the outputs of ADB-funded tourism projects in the GMS.

Discussion:

29. Mr. Schipani suggested for MTCO to include in the agenda of the next TWG meeting country-to-country assistance programs which have become increasingly important (for example, PRC and Thailand provide scholarships to neighboring countries). The ongoing Mekong Discovery Trail project in Lao PDR could take advantage of project resources available under the STDP to support opportunities for knowledge sharing and complementarities. Sharing of occupational skills standards could be done by MTCO through a web-based knowledge center. He emphasized the need for proper reporting on MTCO's attendance in international events, and suggested the need for selectivity and focus on events that could give the best value and returns, regardless of whether attendance is cost-free to MTCO.

30. Copies of presentations and reports under this agenda item are in [Appendix 5](#).

Agenda Item 6: GMS Country Project Updates

6.1 Project Updates by GMS Countries

Cambodia

31. Cambodia reported that international tourist arrivals in 2010 reached 2,508,289, representing a 16% change, with average length of stay of 6.45 days, hotel occupancy rate at 65.74 %, and tourism receipts of US\$1.786 billion. Mode of arrivals by air stood at 50.3% and by land and water ways at 49.7%. The biggest number of visitors came from ASEAN at 701,275, followed by Eastern Asia at 519,795, and Europe at 335,619. Between January and September 2011, international tourist arrivals to Cambodia reached 2,084,789, with visitors from ASEAN at 776,478, followed by Eastern Asia at 563,443, and Europe at 263,693. Cambodia currently has 20 international border checkpoints with neighbouring countries, besides sea and river check points. Gateway to Cambodia: by air (3), river (1), sea (1), and land (18). The Southern Tourism Corridor (CAM, THAI, VIE) links with Mekong Delta and southern Thailand and Bangkok. Cambodia bay has become a member of the most beautiful bays in the world club, hosted the World Ecotourism Conference in Preah Sihanouk Province in October 2011, and will soon have direct flights between Siem Reap and Sihanoukville via the national carrier. Cambodia also mentioned developments on other subregional cooperation programs e.g., Emerald Triangle, CLMV, and ACMECS.

Guangxi Province, PRC

32. Representative of Guangxi, PRC, reported that from January to October 2011, international tourist arrivals (overnight only) reached 2.4966 million (+18%) with tourism exchange revenue at US\$ 0.83 billion (+18%). Domestic tourist arrivals (including one-day-trip) reached 132.82 million person-time (+13%), with domestic tourism revenue at RMB 97.5 billion (+30%). In 2010, international tourist arrivals (overnight only) was at 2.5024 million person-time (+19.2%), with tourism exchange revenue at US\$ 0.807 billion (+25.5%). Domestic tourist arrivals (including one-day-trip) reached 140.735 million person-time (+19.2%), with domestic tourism revenue of RMB 89.81 billion (+36.7%). Provincial tourism gross earnings reached RMB 95.295 billion (+36.0%). Top 10 international tourist market sources included Viet Nam, Malaysia, America, South Korea, France, Japan, Indonesia Britain, Singapore, and Germany. The Guilin Institute for Tourism now serves as GMS tourism training base.

Lao PDR

33. Lao PDR reported that for the first 9 months of 2011, international tourist arrivals reached 2.41 million (+22%). Arrivals from the GMS countries were recorded as follows: Cambodia (+1% increase), Myanmar (+9%), Thailand (+18%), Viet Nam (+64%), PRC (-9%). There are 23 international border checkpoints, with visa on arrival available in 20 checkpoints. There are 4 international airports with visa on arrival. The government will soon allow neighboring countries to use border pass to enter Laos and visit more provinces with extended stay of up to 6 days. Under the STDP, Lao PDR is implementing several activities along NSEC and EWEC corridors. Lao PDR plans to organize an Emerald Triangle meeting next year. Agreement has been forged on overland travel between Lao PDR and Thailand, and there are plans to organize a meeting with PRC and Thailand on possible tripartite agreement for overland visitors.

Myanmar

34. Myanmar reported that international tourist arrivals in 2010 reached 791,505 (+3.8%). For the first 2 quarter of 2011, there were 407,937 arrivals, a significant increase in arrivals at Yangon, Mandalay and Bagan gateways. There are 3 main entry check points at the North Eastern Region (Muse) along Myanmar-PRC border, Eastern Region (Tachileik), and South Eastern Region (Kauthaung, Phayathonezu) along Myanmar-Thailand border. Top sources from Asia in 2010 were Thailand, PRC, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore and India. Top sources from Western

Europe were France, Germany, UK, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. For the first 2 quarters of 2011, Malaysian arrivals grew by 88%. Easy accessibility to visit Myanmar by air and land by citizens of Thailand and PRC contributes to increased arrivals from these countries. November is the peak season for Myanmar tourism and the MoHT is developing guidelines to develop hotels in main destinations to address challenges related to overbooking and cancellations.

Thailand

35. Thailand reported that in 2010, there were 15.9 million international tourist arrivals (+12.63%). In the first 10 months of 2011, international tourist arrivals increased more than 25%. As of end of Q3 of 2011, Thailand welcomed 14.39 million international visitors (+27%). For 2011, foreign visitors to Thailand are expected to reach 16.6 million. From January to October 2011, there were 15.8 million visitors which are slightly close to target. However, the severe flood situation affected the number of foreign visitors from September. Also, there were high expansion rates in most of the markets, except the Americas. Largest market was from East Asia region, which amounted to 8.1 million, representing an increase of 15%. Thailand also saw a growth rate of 20.4% in South Asia, 17.6% in Middle East, 13.8% in Africa, 9.4% in Europe and 7% in Oceania, in spite of a slight decrease of 1% in the Americas. In 2010, Thailand's tourism receipt amounted to US\$18,706 million (+ 25.7 %). The largest amount of tourism receipt was from the European market, which amounted to US\$7,420 million in 2010 (+ 23%). For the first 3 months of 2011, Thailand tourism receipt amounted to more than US\$7,203 million (+ 27.1 %). The European market was still largest region for tourism receipt from international tourist arrivals in 2011, which amounted to US\$3,290 million (+ 30.1%). On the top 10 of international tourist arrivals in 2010 were Malaysia and PRC. The economic crisis in Europe and the Americas has affected the number of tourists from these 2 regions, but the emerging markets (PRC, India, and Russia) represent highly important markets in the future. Tourist arrival from the GMS countries is topped by PRC at 1.2 million in 2010 and 1.3 million in the first 9 months of 2011 (no exact number of visitors from Yunnan and Guangxi), followed by Lao PDR at 700,000 in 2010 (+20.1%) and 630,000 in first 9 months of 2011, and Cambodia (+51% in 2010 and +61.3% in 2011). International tourist arrival to Thailand has been growing because of its strong marketing strategy as well as increased connectivity with neighbouring countries. Thailand strongly believes that the GMS Tourism Sector 2011-2015 Roadmap will promote sustainable tourism in the region with increasing quantity and quality of visitors. The increasing trend of visitors through GMS border immigration checkpoints is a highly positive sign of GMS cooperation.

Viet Nam

36. Viet Nam reported that in 2010, international tourist arrivals reached 5.04 million (+34.8%). For the first 10 months of 2011, international arrivals reached 4.8 million (+15.8%). No update was given on border checkpoints. On GMS TSS priority projects, Viet Nam is implementing tourism HRD and pro-poor sustainable tourism projects with funding from Spain, SNV, Luxembourg Development Cooperation, EU, and ADB. STDP project has a component on subregional cooperation focusing on training and HRD, and sharing of experience on assessment centers. Since ASEAN and GMS have similar frameworks for tourism cooperation, Viet Nam recommended combining these efforts and avoiding duplication. Viet Nam is planning to organize an International Travel Expo in 2012 to be held in Ha Noi (back-to-back with CLMV ministerial meeting).

37. Copies of presentations and reports under this Agenda Item are in [Appendix 6](#).

6.2 Statements by Developing Partners

38. Upon invitation by the Chairman, representatives of development partner agencies gave their respective statements, as follows:

39. Representative of IUCN Southeast Asia thanked the organizers for the invitation to attend the Bagan events. He noted that promotion of ecotourism and adventure tourism must be effectively regulated and managed to ensure long-term sustainability, in light of the impact of tourism on

consumption of food and water, and the effects on fragile ecosystems. The GMS is one of the most dynamic regions in the world, where tourism is growing rapidly. Myanmar is now at the cusp of massive tourism growth. IUCN is interested in tourism as a positive force for local communities to move away from environmentally destructive activities, and would be pleased to collaborate with MTCO and TWG by drawing on its network of scientists to help in planning for tourism in protected areas and natural world heritage sites. He congratulated TWG and MTCO on their achievements, and urged expanded collaboration with the GMS Working Group on Environment (WGE) on pro-poor, pro-environment tourism development.

40. Representative of Royal Norwegian Embassy thanked the host for the successful arrangements in Bagan and mentioned that Norway is engaging with Myanmar on sustainable tourism. He expressed encouragement about ongoing efforts towards maximizing tremendous potentials whilst protecting the valuable tourism assets in the subregion, and making use of opportunities to develop tourism in sustainable ways to be shared with generations to come. tourism.

41. Representative of UNESCO Bangkok (statement read by Mr. Florence) noted that tourism at World Heritage properties around the world is growing rapidly, and tourism management has increasingly become a central issue for many of these properties. The relationship between World Heritage and tourism is two way: if managed well, tourism offers benefits to World Heritage properties and local communities and can contribute to cross-cultural exchange. However, if not managed well, tourism can pose challenges to heritage sites and local communities. At the request of the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Center is developing a new program on World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism to be presented at the 36th session of the Committee in 2012. An important part of the program is to strengthen UNESCO's engagement with tourism-related partnerships/initiatives. World Heritage sites in the GMS now number 19, and UNESCO has been working closely with site management and tourism authorities to ensure the proper conservation of these sites. UNESCO has also undertaken a range of standard-setting sustainable tourism projects in the GMS and is pleased to continue to work closely with the GMS member countries and development partners to ensure that cultural and eco-tourism can be mobilized successfully for conservation and development objectives in the GMS.

42. The Chairman expressed his thanks to the development partners for their statements.

Discussion:

43. Thailand reported that they received response from UNESCO HQ indicating support in principle to TWG's proposal on "Promoting Responsible Heritage Tourism for the GMS", with some comments from the World Heritage Center, and requested Thailand for more details. Thailand will revise the proposal and send it to the other countries for comments before resubmitting it to the Center. Thailand also apologized for the postponement of the hosting of the meeting on the Emerald Triangle.

44. Mr. Schipani shared information about the ongoing close coordination with WGE. Under the Core Environment Program, one of the areas where the TWG and WGE could collaborate is on strengthening sustainable finance mechanisms for protected area management that will look at more sustainable forms of land use management. ADB Thailand Resident Mission could approach the Environment Operations Center based in Bangkok which serves as secretariat to WGE, to explore the possibility of mobilizing resources to prepare a study and investment framework to underpin investment in ecolodges/ecotourism activities in and around select protected areas. If completed in time, this could be presented at the next MTF in June 2012.

45. Cambodia supported Mr. Schipani's suggestion to link tourism with the environment sector in support of green growth, not only in protected areas, but also in social and other areas.

Agenda Item 7: Date and Venue of the Next TWG Meeting (TWG-29)

46. The Meeting agreed to hold the 29th TWG Meeting (TWG-29) back to back with the Mekong Tourism Forum 2012 on 12 June 2012 in Chiang Rai as proposed by Thailand.

Agenda Item 9: Consideration and adoption of the report

47. The summary of proceedings will be prepared by the GMS Secretariat and MTCO. The first draft will be circulated by MTCO to the NTOs for comments as soon as possible.

Closing Session

48. The Chair, Co-Chair, and MTCO thanked all the participants for their active contribution and support to the success of the meeting and related parallel events.