

TWENTY EIGHTH MEETING OF THE GMS TOURISM WORKING GROUP (TWG-28)

29 November 2011, Bagan, Myanmar

Remarks by

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_____, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar,

Distinguished Delegates from the GMS Countries and Staff of the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office,

Representatives of Development Partner Agencies,

Participants from the Public and Private Sector,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you at this 28th Meeting of the GMS Tourism Working Group. On behalf of the Asian Development Bank, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism of Myanmar for organizing and hosting this meeting in collaboration with the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office.

Over the past two days I have had the opportunity to participate in the GMS Travel Leaders Symposium on Sustainable Tourism, the GMS Sustainable Tourism Development Project Steering Committee Meeting, and the excellent technical tour of Bagan's fascinating ancient landscape.

During these events, I was deeply impressed by the commitment of the tourism working group to promote sustainable tourism and protect the subregion's precious heritage assets. Even more impressive is the spirit of friendship and cooperation among GMS tourism stakeholders, which I am sure will help speed the recovery from recent flooding that has negatively affected tourism and related industries in the GMS.

As you may be aware, the new GMS Strategic Framework covering 2012 to 2022 will be formally endorsed by the GMS Leaders at their Fourth Summit, to be held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar this December. The new framework prioritizes development of the Mekong region as 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 that was endorsed by the GMS Tourism Ministers in January 2011. It is my pleasure to inform the meeting that a report on the refocused tourism strategy has been prepared with ADB support, and will be presented to the GMS Leaders at appropriate ceremonies during the Summit.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to recall one critical point that the GMS Ministers emphasized at the recent 17th GMS Ministerial Conference held Phnom Penh in August this year. This is the challenge to translate the GMS strategic framework into a comprehensive set of well-defined, time-bound, and realistically doable interventions.

Today, we will review how the tourism working group is meeting this challenge, and exchange views on the proposed results framework for tourism under the new GMS strategic framework.

Another important objective of our meeting is to discuss how we could mobilize much-needed resources to scale-up implementation of the Explore Mekong Campaign, improve subregional tourism knowledge management, and strengthen the organizational effectiveness of MTCO. We will also review preparations for the 2012 Mekong Tourism Forum, to be held in Chiang Rai, Thailand in June 2012, and hear a report on the 2011 MTF that was successfully held in Pakse, Lao PDR earlier this year.

In closing, allow me to once again thank the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for hosting this meeting, and for ensuring our pleasant and comfortable stay here in Bagan. As in the past, ADB, in cooperation with MTCO and other development partners, stands ready to assist the tourism working group achieve the subregional goals that have been set for the tourism sector.

I wish all of us a successful TWG-28 Meeting. Thank you very much.