

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
(ESCAP)
ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)**

**Fifth Meeting of the Working Group on the Greater Mekong
Subregion Tourism Sector**

**29-30 May 1997
Chiang Rai**

DRAFT REPORT

ORGANIZATION

1. The Fifth Meeting of the Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector was held in Chiang Rai, Thailand from 29 to 30 May 1997. The objectives of the Meeting were to facilitate the implementation of priority subregional tourism projects and to discuss specific areas for promoting cooperation in the tourism sector of the Greater Mekong subregion. The Meeting was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in collaboration with the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

ATTENDANCE

2. Representatives of national tourism organizations of Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam as well as representatives of ESCAP, ADB, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) participated in the Meeting. Representatives of the International Tourism Development Institute of Japan, Diethelm Travel and Thai Airways International Public Company Limited also participated in the Meeting. The list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

OPENING SESSION

3. In his opening statement, Mr. Pradech Phayakvichien, Deputy Governor for Planning and Development, Tourism Authority of Thailand, stated that the Fifth Meeting represented another milestone in the Greater Mekong subregion tourism projects in view of the efforts and initiatives of all six countries. The progress since the Fourth Meeting has yielded a number of useful results, including thorough promotion by distributing the video and brochures entitled "Jewels of the Mekong" through PATA marketing networks worldwide as well as through 17 TAT overseas offices. Special Mekong destination seminars have also been organized by PATA. Mr. Pradech announced that TAT has prepared the Terms of Reference for the Tourism Marketing Strategies and has approached the government of Thailand to be the main sponsor for the Tourism Marketing Plan. TAT has also undertaken to prepare the Terms of Reference on GMS North-South Tourism Flows. He announced that the 1997 national budget allocated for development programmes related to subregional cooperation amounted to \$US 665.6 million, about one-third of which would involve infrastructure development and related facilities in border areas that would make travel easier to and within the subregion. The Agency for Coordinating Mekong Tourism Activities (AMTA), which would act as a secretariat to the Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector, started operations in January 1997. TAT would give full support to AMTA in order to maintain the momentum of cooperation, monitor progress on projects and strengthen cordial relations among the member countries. Mr. Pradech noted that cooperation would help prepare all member countries to benefit from the coming "New Golden Age of Travel". He thanked ESCAP and ADB for their support and assistance to help making the Meeting possible.

4. In his statement, Mr. Eustace Nonis, Director, Agriculture and Social Sectors Department (West), ADB was pleased to be associated with the Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector, because it was one of the most active working groups in the Greater Mekong subregion cooperation programme. He pointed out that the opportunities were

available to realize concrete achievements in the future in the form of drawing more tourists to the Greater Mekong Subregion. He welcomed the establishment of AMTA as useful mechanism to oversee implementation and report on progress of priority projects. ADB expected to start implementing Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Planning Study soon, based on cooperation from the member countries and it was proposed that AMTA would be involved in coordinating the study's implementation. He also observed that there was significant progress on several other priority projects, so that perhaps it was time to consider issues relating to the policy and regulatory framework that has an impact on tourism development and cooperation. There was a fair amount of work and several decisions to be taken at this Fifth Meeting. Mr. Nonis commended TAT and ESCAP for the excellent meeting arrangements and thanked PATA and other international organizations for their support and cooperation. He observed, in conclusion, that a successful Meeting would benefit from the member countries' spirit of subregional cooperation.

5. In his statement, Mr. M. Rahmatullah, Director, Transport, Communications and Tourism Division, ESCAP said that it was encouraging to see the tangible results of cooperation among the six countries with respect to the priority projects, and equally gratifying to note the collaboration among international and regional organizations, including ESCAP, ADB, PATA, WTO, UNESCO, UNEP and the Mekong River Commission. He said that the results achieved thus far had been recognized in a number of venues, including the fifty-third session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held in April 1997. The Commission endorsed the recommendations and decisions of the Intergovernmental Meeting on Tourism Development held in December 1996, including the recommendation that ESCAP strengthen its activities in promoting tourism in the Greater Mekong subregion. One important decision reported by Mr. Rahmatullah was the Commission's agreement that the Committee on Transport and Communications should be renamed the "Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development". He stated that ESCAP was in the process of publishing the Study on Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Planning (Phase I) and that the ESCAP study on facilitation of travel to and within the Greater Mekong subregion would be presented at this meeting. In conclusion, he was pleased to take account of the meaningful and substantive cooperation achieved in such a short time by the Working Group.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

6. The Meeting elected Mr. Pradech Phayakvichien, Deputy Governor for Planning and Development, Tourism Authority of Thailand as Chairman, Mr. Sok Chenda, Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Tourism, Cambodia and U Tin Htay, Director (Projects), Directorate of Hotels and Tourism, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar as Vice Chairmen.

7. The Meeting adopted the Agenda which is attached as Annex 2.

8. Agenda notes were circulated at the Meeting to facilitate discussion. These notes are attached as Annex 3.

AGENDA ITEM 4(A): PROMOTING THE SUBREGION AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

9. The representative of PATA informed the Meeting on her organization's activities to promote the subregion as a tourist destination. Promotional materials, namely, the video entitled,

"Jewels of the Mekong", maps, and posters have been distributed to various PATA chapters worldwide. Destination seminars on the GMS, which were well received, have been held in various cities. Planned promotional activities include: (i) a destination seminar in Japan later in the year; and (ii) familiarization trips for members of the media and travel agents from Europe, North America, and Asia. The Meeting noted with appreciation the report of PATA.

10. With respect to the promotional activities being supported by PATA, the representative of Cambodia observed the need for the GMS to be "branded" within the major tourism markets, and suggested that PATA focus its promotional efforts on a few high-impact activities, preferably involving PATA chapters worldwide. The representative of ADB confirmed that the PATA chapter in New Zealand has been active in raising awareness of the GMS. The Chairman commended the efforts of PATA and reiterated its valuable contribution to the promotion of the GMS as a tourist destination. The representative of PATA clarified that the GMS is already becoming well recognized among travel promotion agencies, and that the destination seminars on the GMS were undertaken through the active participation of PATA chapters worldwide.

11. The representative of Thailand reported on the progress of TAT's activities related to the promotion of the subregion as a tourist destination. The Meeting noted with appreciation the following activities of TAT: (i) helped promote and distribute the various promotional materials produced by PATA to its 17 overseas offices and major trade fairs, such as the World Travel Mart held in London; (ii) organized several educational tours to the GMS for tour operators; and (iii) organized familiarization trips to the GMS for members of the media and travel agents from Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan Province of China, and Japan. TAT will produce a detailed promotional video on the GMS and a destination map of the GMS.

12. The representative of ADB expressed appreciation for the efforts of PATA, TAT, and Thai Airways International in promoting the GMS as a tourist destination. He encouraged the Working Group members, international organizations, and the private sector to actively take part in promoting the GMS. The representative of Thailand requested Thai Airways International to continue to assist in promotional activities for the GMS. The representative of ESCAP proposed that the China National Tourism Administration help promote the GMS through its overseas offices. The Meeting noted the foregoing suggestions.

13. The representative of WTO informed the Meeting of the activities being planned or being implemented by WTO in relation to promoting the GMS as a tourist destination. These are as follows: (i) inclusion of the GMS in WTO's Global Study entitled, Vision 2020, which should help create a global perspective of the subregion's tourism market; (ii) development of a classified special sub-database dedicated to the GMS within the WTO global database; and (iii) assistance to the GMS countries in their participation in major trade fairs. The Meeting expressed appreciation to WTO for including the GMS in its activities and for considering specific projects for the GMS tourism sector.

14. The Meeting considered the draft terms of reference prepared by TAT on a proposed study of a tourism marketing plan for the GMS. The draft TOR is presented as Annex 4. The following suggestions were presented on the draft TOR: (i) focus on images of the "jewels" to establish "branding" identification; (ii) continue to emphasize promotion aimed at creating awareness of the subregion as a tourist destination; (iii) broadly prioritize target markets recognizing the variations in target markets among countries; (iv) emphasize product definition; (v) ensure that the study does not duplicate similar components of Phases 2 and 3 of the Mekong/Lancang River Tourism

Planning Study; and (vi) schedule submission of reports prior to future meetings of the Working Group for thorough review and discussion by the Working Group members. The representative of Thailand informed the Meeting that further suggestions on the draft TOR could be sent to TAT on or before 15 June 1997.

15. The representative of ESCAP informed the Meeting about the results of discussions with representatives of the Government of France regarding possible funding of a tourism marketing strategy for the GMS. The Government of France expressed two concerns, namely: (i) status of a similar tourism project on a marketing proposal being prepared by TAT; and (ii) possible involvement by the Mekong River Commission. In this regard, the Meeting agreed to: (i) integrate the ESCAP-proposed tourism marketing strategy and the TAT-initiated tourism marketing plan; (ii) proceed with securing funding from the Royal Thai Government on the tourism marketing plan once the terms of reference for the study is finalized; and (iii) implement projects with available funds, while seeking additional funds for other components as needed. The representatives of PATA and ESCAP expressed their willingness to be associated with the preparation of a tourism marketing plan.

16. The representative of Thailand informed the Meeting of an ongoing joint marketing activity among Thailand, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. This involves: (i) identifying tourism products in the three countries that can be marketed; (ii) developing tourism packages based on these products; and (iii) helping tour operators and other private sector tourism organizations in jointly marketing the tourism packages. The Meeting noted that this activity may serve as a model for other similar activities involving other sub-groupings of the six GMS countries. The representative of Cambodia noted that the joint development of tourism products provides an excellent opportunity for the Working Group members to tackle problems together. The representative of ADB noted that the industry seminars envisioned for Phases 2 and 3 of the Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Planning Study are possible venues for developing cross-border products.

17. The representative of Thailand informed the Meeting that TAT planned to host the PATA-sponsored Eco and Adventure Travel Mart scheduled for 1999. He requested PATA to feature GMS tourism products in the event. The Meeting agreed that the six countries, should they decide to participate, prepare promotional material for the event jointly with the private sector.

18. The Meeting noted the establishment of the Agency for Coordinating Mekong Tourism Activities (AMTA) in January 1997. AMTA is tasked to coordinate marketing and human resource development activities for the Tourism Working Group. The Meeting agreed that an official press kit be prepared for use by AMTA, and requested the Working Group members to contribute materials for the press kit. The proposed contents of the press kit are presented as Annex 5. The Meeting subsequently endorsed the proposed contents of the official press kit.

AGENDA ITEM 4(B): SUBREGIONAL TOURISM FORUM

19. The Meeting noted the following information on the Second Mekong Tourism Forum presented by the representative of PATA: (i) the Forum will be held at the Saigon Prince Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam on 30-31 October 1997; (ii) the theme of the Forum is "Opening New Avenues of Tourism in the GMS; (iii) a number of registrations have already been received; and (iv) the Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), which is the host organization, has been very helpful in the preparations. The representative of PATA requested the Working Group members to help promote the Forum in their respective countries. The representative of VNAT

confirmed his agency's close coordination with PATA as well as with the other government agencies in Viet Nam.

20. The representative of Lao PDR requested from PATA guidelines on how the six NTOs would participate in the Forum to maximize the benefits to be derived. The representative of PATA agreed to this request and requested the NTOs to make plans for actively participating at the Forum, and make full use of the opportunity to network with the participants. The Meeting agreed that PATA would send out written guidelines to the six NTOs as soon as possible.

21. The representative of ESCAP suggested that a more detailed rationale be incorporated in subsequent versions of promotional brochures for the Mekong Tourism Forum. The representative of Cambodia suggested that international agencies, such as the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group (IFC) and consulting agencies be invited to the Mekong Tourism Forum. The representative of PATA reiterated the need for assistance in promoting the Second Mekong Tourism Forum since it is a stand-alone event. The Chairman suggested the use of overseas offices of the GMS NTOs in promoting the event. The Meeting noted the foregoing suggestions.

22. With regard to the organization of subsequent tourism forums, the Meeting agreed that: (i) future forums should be organized, to the extent possible, in conjunction with a major international event taking place in the host country; and (ii) a Working Group meeting should be held at the same venue prior to any Forum. The Meeting proposed that the Third Mekong Tourism Forum be held in China some time in June or July 1998. The representative China agreed to express the Meeting's proposal to the government authorities concerned. She informed the Meeting that an international trade fair would be held in Shanghai in 1998. The representative of Thailand informed the Meeting that an international travel show is scheduled to be held in Bangkok in August 1998. The Meeting agreed that an alternative venue for the Third Mekong Tourism Forum, should China decide to decline, will be Bangkok. The Meeting also agreed that AMTA would be responsible for following up on the decision of China regarding the hosting of the Third Mekong Tourism Forum. The representative of Lao PDR informed the Meeting his country would consider hosting the Fourth Mekong Tourism Forum in 1999.

AGENDA ITEM 4(C): TRAINING THE TRAINERS IN THE BASIC SKILLS OF TOURISM

Project 3.1: Study Tours to Thailand and Singapore

23. The representative of Thailand expressed an offer from TAT to sponsor a second Training the Trainers Program in Tourism for the GMS. This would involve planning staff of NTOs and educators. The Meeting noted the offer from TAT.

24. The representative of Cambodia informed the Meeting that the trainers from Cambodia who were trained under the ADB-sponsored Study Tours to Thailand and Singapore had been effective. In this regard, the representative of ADB proposed that AMTA follow up on the effectiveness of the trainers in the other five countries. The Meeting noted the foregoing suggestion.

Project 3.2: Traveling Short Courses

25. The representative of WTO confirmed the interest of the European Union (EU) in assisting

five of the six GMS countries in a training the trainers program in tourism, which would involve the private sector. EU is considering modalities on how to start a training project for the GMS which would probably include an initial needs assessment study. The representative of WTO clarified that WTO's role in this project would be as a facilitating agency instead of an executing agency. On its own, WTO could serve as executing agency for training the trainers projects in tourism. He cited several examples of WTO-executed projects, including a planned East Asia-Pacific educating the tourism educators project. The Meeting requested WTO to follow up with EU, on an urgent basis, the implementation of the proposed training the trainers project.

26. The representative of Thailand made the following inquiries: (i) given that EU financing can be made available to five of the six GMS countries, what could be done if a donor could be found to finance the involvement of the sixth country; and (ii) would it be possible for the GMS countries to participate in the planned East Asia-Pacific educating the educators project by WTO. On the first question, the representative of ESCAP suggested that the project proceed with the five countries and, once the training materials have already been developed, these could subsequently be used to conduct training for any of the six GMS countries. On the second question, the representative of WTO responded affirmatively, but reiterated that this training project was designed for middle- to high-level officials, university teachers and others involved in tourism education.

AGENDA ITEM 4(D): TRAINING RESOURCE MANAGERS IN CONSERVATION AND TOURISM

27. The Meeting noted that training for managers of protected natural areas was included in various ADB regional technical assistance projects being formulated. These projects and their status are summarized in the Agenda Notes presented as Annex 3.

28. The representative of UNESCO noted possible points of interface between planned or ongoing UNESCO programmes on heritage management and the Working Group's project on training resource managers: (i) the Site Managers project which was applicable to the GMS because the GMS tourism "jewels" identified are also UNESCO World Heritage Sites; (ii) a Man on the Biosphere project for educating the educators of managers of protected areas; and (iii) Heritage and Associated Schools project which involved a network 20,000 high schools. An agreement in principle between UNESCO and WTO had also been reached on joint training programmes for managers of heritage sites. He informed the Meeting that UNESCO's 1998-1999 Programme Budget for Heritage and Environmental Conservation provided for regular programme funds that could be made available for tourism training activities. In this regard, he encouraged the Working Group to formulate training projects that could utilize UNESCO's Programme Budget for 1998-1999. The Meeting noted with interest the foregoing report of UNESCO and requested the agency to follow up funding prospects for proposed GMS projects.

AGENDA ITEM 4(E): MEKONG/LANCANG RIVER TOURISM PLANNING STUDY

29. The representative of ADB informed the Meeting that a detailed technical assistance paper for Phases 2 and 3 of the Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Planning Study had been prepared and reviewed by ADB staff, and was now ready for ADB Management approval. Copies of the draft technical assistance paper had been circulated to the six GMS NTOs, and comments received by ADB had been incorporated in a revised version. The project cost is \$655,000, of which ADB would provide US\$600,000. The six GMS countries would provide in-kind support equivalent to US\$55,000. As part of the implementation arrangements, four

workshops would be held to discuss the six draft concept plans for each of the river segments and involve participation by tour operators, travel agents, NTOs, and international agencies concerned. These concept plans would then be presented to six industry seminars to be held in each of the six GMS countries and include participation by a broader international audience. The seminars would aim at developing public-private partnerships in the implementation of the concept plans. Each of the six GMS NTOs had been requested to nominate one project manager and two full-time counterpart staff who would be responsible for in-country coordination of the project. AMTA would be requested to help coordinate the implementation of the project. ADB had forwarded to the cooperating agencies in each of the six GMS countries a letter of agreement that contains, among other things, the responsibilities of project managers and counterpart staff. These would have to be signed and returned to ADB. The Meeting noted the urgent need to submit the letters of commitment and to identify the project manager and counterpart staff for each of the six countries, and agreed that these requirements will be sent to ADB on or before 15 June 1997. The consulting team for the project would start their services in September 1997. The project is scheduled to be completed by March 1998.

30. The representative of Cambodia expressed concern that the project may duplicate similar efforts being implemented or are planned by the Mekong River Commission (MRC) or the Government of Japan-initiated Working Group on Economic Cooperation among Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar. The representative of MRC noted that MRC's Lower Mekong Basin Development Programme covers only Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam and that tourism projects had yet to be developed due to lack of staff. The representative of ADB assured that the project would not duplicate any ongoing or planned activities of the Working Group on Economic Cooperation among Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar based on recent discussions between ADB and representatives of the Working Group.

AGENDA ITEM 4(F): STUDY OF FACILITATION OF TRAVEL TO AND WITHIN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION

31. The representative of ESCAP presented the findings of the draft study of facilitation of travel to and within the Greater Mekong Subregion, which is presented in Annex 6. The Meeting considered the findings of the Study. The Meeting noted that various travel-related regulations in the six GMS countries have changed and these should be reflected in the final version of the Study. The representative of ESCAP requested the six NTOs to send updated information to his agency as soon as possible.

32. With respect to the "hard" infrastructure aspects of travel facilitation, the representative of ADB informed the Meeting about the establishment of a Working Group on Air Linkages for the GMS as well as of the progress on two high priority subregional road projects: detailed engineering design study and consideration of approaches to cross-border issues are underway for the Phnom Penh-Ho Chi Minh City Road project and the Thailand-Lao PDR-Viet Nam East West Transport Corridor Project. The representative of ESCAP noted that a Seminar on Accession to International Conventions was jointly organized by ESCAP and ADB in November 1996 for the GMS countries to discuss cross-border issues and recommend approaches for addressing such issues. He noted that facilitating cross border travel would involve various Ministries within each country. ESCAP would also organize a regional seminar on facilitation of travel in 1998. The six GMS countries and several other countries in the Asian and Pacific region will be invited to participate.

AGENDA ITEM 4(G): VILLAGE BASED TOURISM

33. The representative of ADB presented a progress report on the Village Based Tourism Project. Pilot villages had been identified by Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam and profiles of four of these are attached in Annex 7. The ADB-assisted project on Phases 2 and 3 of the Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Planning Study would include feasibility assessments of the selected sites. Funding for individual country projects might be requested from bilateral donors. International agencies might also be involved as in the case in the UNESCO-designed ecotourism development project for Nam Ha in Lao PDR to be financed by the Government of New Zealand. The Meeting noted that the Government of New Zealand is willing to consider a subregional village tourism development training program at the Mekong Institute of Khon Kaen University in Thailand for 1998. IFC's Technical Assistance Trust Fund Programme was suggested as possible funding source for a subregional program of private sector tourism development advice to assist NTOs with planning the pilot villages projects. A "GMS Network for Ecotourism" had been proposed to be centered on AMTA as a way to share experience and expertise in this area. The Meeting noted the foregoing report.

34. The representative of UNESCO reaffirmed the importance of the project as a tool to improve the social and economic well-being of the village people. He strongly recommended that the Village Based Tourism Project be carefully formulated so as to avoid possible adverse social, cultural, and environmental impact as had been the case in some pilot village based tourism situations. In this regard, the Meeting noted the importance of the training component of the Project. The Meeting requested UNESCO to make a presentation on case studies of village based tourism at the next Working Group meeting.

35. The Meeting requested UNESCO to consider supporting village based tourism projects for the GMS. The Meeting requested assistance in project formulation. The representative of ESCAP responded that capacity building should be part of any assistance to the NTOs in this regard.

AGENDA ITEM 4(H): GMS NORTH-SOUTH TOURISM FLOWS

36. The Meeting considered the draft terms of reference of the project prepared by TAT. The draft terms of reference is attached as Annex 8. The representative of Thailand requested the Working Group members to forward their comments on the draft terms of reference on or before 15 June 1997.

37. The representative of Thailand emphasized that the purpose of the Study is to serve as a policy paper. It will identify specific infrastructure necessary to facilitate north-south tourism flows and will make policy recommendations to the concerned departments of the respective GMS governments. The Meeting noted that the Seventh GMS Ministerial Conference fully supported the project. The Meeting agreed to incorporate as part of this Study the ESCAP-initiated Review of the Policy and Regulatory Framework that currently impacts on Subregional Tourism Development and Cooperation.

**AGENDA ITEM 5: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT
OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION TOURISM SECTOR**

38. The representative of Thailand reported on the establishment of the Agency for Coordinating Mekong Tourism Activities (AMTA) which would serve as the secretariat of the Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector. The Tourism Authority of Thailand would voluntarily serve as coordinator for AMTA. The objectives of AMTA were set forth: (i) coordinate Mekong tourism activities; (ii) coordinate marketing activities for the Working Group, such as sales promotions at travel trade fairs, media trips to the subregion, agent familiarization trips to the subregion, and so forth; and (iii) facilitate and handle issues of human resources development in the field of tourism. It was noted that AMTA had an E-mail address to facilitate communication and information exchange worldwide.

39. Brief descriptions were given of several projects currently under preparation by AMTA. The first was a background paper on tourism marketing strategies to be used as key marketing issues to be discussed by the Working Group. The second was a survey of training needs in order to identify priority areas so that appropriate courses could be organized. The third involved facilitating the formulation of the Second Training of the Trainers in Basic Skills of Tourism.

40. The views and comments of the member countries of the Working Group were sought on the work currently being done by AMTA. Suggestions on possible future directions for the work of AMTA were also sought.

**AGENDA ITEM 6: REVIEW OF THE POLICY AND REGULATORY
FRAMEWORK THAT CURRENTLY IMPACTS ON
SUBREGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION**

41. The review proposed in this agenda item was considered in conjunction with the work being done on GMS North-South Tourism Flows which was a new topic discussed agenda item 4 (h). This latter topic had been covered in a project document submitted by Thailand entitled "GMS North/South Tourism Flow Terms of Reference", which is attached as Annex 8. In the progress report, the representative of Thailand said that the proposed study on tourism flows would be a policy paper designed to identify air linkages and air transport facilities in order to make recommendations for implementation. Recommendations were expected to address issues involving other sectors, such as civil aviation and transport.

42. The representative of ESCAP observed that the study proposed by Thailand could include the review of policy and regulatory frameworks that might facilitate or impede tourism in the subregion. Myanmar and Thailand had completed a questionnaire on this matter and returned their responses to ESCAP. The other member countries were urged to complete and return the questionnaire to ESCAP as soon as possible. The representative from Thailand agreed that the study of GMS North-South Tourism flows could include the issues covered under this agenda item with appropriate adjustments in the terms of reference and based on comments which other member countries should send to AMTA within the next two weeks.

AGENDA ITEM 7: DATE AND VENUE OF THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH MEETINGS

43. The Meeting requested Viet Nam to host the Sixth Meeting of the Working Group at Ho Chi Minh City in conjunction with the Second Mekong Tourism Forum to be held from 30 to 31 October 1997. The representative of Viet Nam said that this request would be submitted to the Government for approval.

44. The representative of Cambodia offered that Cambodia could host the Seventh Meeting of the Working Group in conjunction with a regional seminar being organized by ESCAP on regional facilitation of travel tentatively scheduled to be held in March 1998 in Cambodia.

AGENDA ITEM 8: OTHER MATTERS

45. A presentation was given by a private sector representative seeking approval in principle for a project entitled "Six Nation Lancang-Mekong River Expedition" which would be self-financed. Based on clarification of the support expected from the member countries and the opportunities for tourism promotion created by the expedition, the representatives from Cambodia and Thailand agreed in principle. The representatives from China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam said they would study the project proposal, consider the matter further and then advise AMTA about their views on this project.

APPRECIATION

46. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the Tourism Authority of Thailand for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting and the warm hospitality accorded to participants. The Meeting expressed gratitude to the Government of Japan for financing the travel costs of ESCAP-sponsored participants.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

47. The report of the Fifth Meeting of the Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector was adopted on 30 May 1997.
