

Tenth Meeting of the Working Group on Tourism

Organization

The Tenth Meeting of the Working Group (the Meeting) on the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Tourism Sector was held in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) from 28-30 November 1999. The objectives of the Meeting were to facilitate the implementation of priority tourism projects and to discuss areas of specific cooperation for promoting tourism in the GMS. The Meeting was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Agency for Coordinating Mekong Tourism Activities (AMTA) in collaboration with the National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR and with financial assistance from the Government of Japan.

Attendance

Representatives from national tourism organizations of Cambodia, People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam as well as representatives of ESCAP, ADB, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), and AMTA participated in the Meeting. Representatives of the UNESCO Principal Regional Office, Canadian Universities Consortium Urban Environmental Management (CUC UEM) at the Asian Institute of Technology, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Association of Thai Travel Agents, IUCN Viet Nam (World Conservation Union), Japan National Tourist Organization, Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research, Angel Airlines, Co., Ltd., Royal Air Cambodge, Vietnam Airlines, Mekong Project Development Facility, Environmental Tourism Consultants, Travel Impact Newswire and members of the Lao PDR tourism private sector also attended the Meeting. The list of participants is attached as [Appendix 1](#).

Opening Session

H.E. Mr. Cheng Sayavong, Chairman of the National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR and Vice Minister of Commerce and Tourism, welcomed the participants of the Meeting and thanked ESCAP and ADB for their support in organizing the Meeting. He highlighted the significance of the Meeting as it is held during the "Visit Laos Year 1999-2000", which will help attract tourists to Lao PDR and strengthen cooperation among the GMS countries. Lao PDR is willing to cooperate in tourism promotion to promote peace and friendship in, and overall well being of, Lao PDR and the GMS. In its National Socioeconomic Development Plan (1996-2000), the Government of Lao PDR considers tourism as a priority for national development, especially in its role in generating foreign exchange. In this, he noted initiatives taken by the Government to promote tourism development and facilitate cooperation: (i) improving North-South and East-West transport links; (ii) facilitating issuance of visas at international airports and Friendship Bridge, including reducing the fee from \$50 to \$30; (iii) opening of many border checkpoints with neighboring countries; and (iv) permitting nationals of neighboring countries to visit Lao PDR for no more than 15 days through a travel company with the use of a border pass. He expressed confidence that the Meeting will discuss issues that will be important to subregional tourism development for the next millennium.

Ms. Emma Yang, Financial Analyst, ADB, outlined the progress made under the ADB-supported program of cooperation among the GMS countries. Besides tourism, major priority development projects are under way in transport, energy, environment, and human

resource development. Ms. Yang noted the substantial accomplishments of the GMS countries in the various areas of tourism cooperation, including joint tourism promotion and marketing, capacity building and skills development, conservation and resource management, and development of Mekong River tourism infrastructure. These efforts have, in no small measure, contributed to making the GMS, represented by the "Jewels of the Mekong", one of the emerging tourist destinations in the world today. She emphasized the importance of discussing the retrospective analysis and prospective view of the Working Group's activities at the Meeting. Related to this, she reiterated the important aspect of ownership by the GMS countries of the subregional tourism initiative, including full ownership by AMTA in promoting and coordinating GMS tourism. She concluded by reaffirming ADB's commitment to the development of the GMS, and to the GMS Program.

Mr. Paisan Wangsai, Director, AMTA, expressed AMTA's appreciation to ESCAP, ADB and PATA for the continuing support in implementing priority subregional tourism projects, and to the National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR for hosting the Meeting. He recognized the presence at the Meeting of marketing representatives from both the public and private sectors who are expected help develop practical and explicit tourism marketing plans and activities for the GMS. He noted two important agenda items that will be tackled at the Meeting: (i) creation of GMS Marketing Task Force; and (ii) strengthening of ownership of AMTA. He emphasized the importance of private sector participation in the activities of the Working Group, especially in helping fully realize the benefits of government policies and projects in tourism. He encouraged the Working Group to work harder in attracting tourists to the Subregion given the dramatic drop in tourist arrivals in 1998 for some of the GMS countries. He mentioned several positive developments in the area of tourism marketing and infrastructure that have taken place since the Ninth Meeting of the Working Group. As the Meeting is being held in conjunction with the Fourth Mekong Tourism Forum, he expressed the hope that the Working Group members would make utmost benefit from the presentations of experts in the tourism industry.

Mr. Ryuji Yamakawa, Chief, Tourism Unit, Transport, Communications, Tourism, and Infrastructure Development Division (TCTIDD), ESCAP, conveyed the message of Mr. M. Rahmatullah, Director, TCTIDD, ESCAP to the Meeting. The strong commitment of the Working Group has been demonstrated by the significant achievements made over the previous nine meetings in the eight subregional tourism programs. Despite the regional financial and economic crisis, the spirit of cooperation among the GMS countries has remained strong and resilient. With recovery steadily taking place, prospects should brighten and contribute to the sustainable development of the Subregion. He urged the Working Group to enhance the GMS as a unique shared tourism asset through joint efforts in implementing key projects, and effective and creative marketing. He emphasized the importance of the Mekong Tourism Forum as a catalyst to close interaction between and among governments and business sector with a view to strengthening efforts to promote the GMS as a single tourist destination. At its 55th Session in April 1999, ESCAP launched *The Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Asian and Pacific Region* to be implemented from 1999 to 2005. The Plan proposes action at the national level, and supporting action at the regional level in six activity areas where capabilities can be strengthened and public-private cooperation can be encouraged. He concluded by expressing ESCAP's intention to work closely with other international organizations involved in tourism; and to assist countries in the region in strengthening capacity for sustainable tourism development.

Election of Officers and Adoption of the Agenda

The Meeting elected Mr. Sanya Abhay, Executive Adviser, National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR as Chairman of the Meeting, and Mr. Santichai Euachongprasit, Deputy Governor for Planning and Development, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), as Vice Chairman.

The Meeting adopted the Agenda which is attached as [Appendix 2](#).

Agenda Notes have been prepared for the Meeting to facilitate discussion of the various agenda items.

Program 1: Destination Marketing

The representative of AMTA reported on the following ongoing tourism marketing initiatives being undertaken by AMTA for the Working Group since the last Meeting: (i) preparation for participation at the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF 2000) to be held in Bangkok, Thailand on 20-26 January 2000 where GMS NTOs will be provided, without charge, exhibition stands at the trade shows and will be given appointment sessions with tourism "buyers"; (ii) preparation for participation at the PATA Travel Mart to be held in Singapore in April 2000; and (iii) improvements in the GMS tourism internet website. The representative of ATTA extended an invitation for one representative from each GMS country's travel agents association to participate in the ATF 2000 as guests of ATTA. ATTA asked NTOs to identify suitable candidates and forward the names to ATTA.

The representative of PATA reaffirmed PATA's commitment to continue its facilitating role in identifying marketing opportunities for the GMS countries. The Meeting noted the following marketing activities for the GMS that PATA has undertaken/is undertaking: (i) presented at destination seminars and trade shows, such as those held in Russia and Finland; (ii) will offer one free booth to AMTA on behalf of the GMS countries at the upcoming PATA Travel Mart in Singapore; (iii) will organize a Mekong Pavilion at the PATA Travel Mart, where AMTA will have a booth; (iv) will offer one-half of a booth for individual operators in the GMS countries; (v) will support the publication of a travel trade report on the GMS for distribution at the PATA Travel Mart; and (vi) will update and enhance the GMS website, including inserting video clips of the "Jewels of the Mekong" video and creating links with existing NTOs' websites. She encouraged the NTOs to make full use of the free booth and ensure private sector participation at the PATA Travel Mart. She also requested the NTOs for updated information to be included in the GMS website.

The representative of PATA reported on the following tourism marketing developments: (i) GMS visit "add-ons" was organized during the year; (ii) destination seminars to Japan will take place in February and March 2000 in time for the PATA Travel Mart and Fifth Mekong Tourism Forum; (iii) communications and various other "how to ..." seminars will be organized next year; and (iv) a PATA publication entitled, *The Mekong Subregion: Country Profile* that contains basic information on each of the GMS countries and facts about major destination markets has been prepared and will be circulated at the Fourth Mekong Tourism Forum to be held from 28 to 30 November 1999 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

The representative of Thailand emphasized the need to support destination marketing activities to help improve tourism traffic to the GMS. He encouraged the Working Group to closely cooperate with AMTA in the preparation of the booths at the upcoming ASEAN Tourism Forum in Bangkok. He informed the Meeting that TAT has contracted the production of a "coffee table" book on GMS tourism, to be entitled "the Jewels of the Mekong" which includes full-color illustration of major tourist attractions in the GMS and a feature of the way of life of people who live along the Mekong River. He assured the Meeting

that the book will give equal emphasis to all six GMS countries. On the production of AMTA's new Mekong Tourism map, he thanked the Meeting for their contribution and informed that copies have been circulated to all the GMS NTOs. Printing of additional copies of the map may be done by each of the six NTOs from their own individual budgets.

The representative of AMTA informed the Meeting that 5,000 copies of the Mekong Tourist Map have been produced for distribution. Feedback on the map has been positive as it provides practical and useful information, including detailed maps showing travel routes, cross-border checkpoints and major tourist attractions. He requested the GMS NTOs to update AMTA on any changes on the information contained in the Map, such as changes in policies on visa issuance. He suggested possible sponsorship by tour operators and/or airlines in future production of the Mekong Tourism Map. Representatives of Cambodia and PRC noted some inaccuracies in the map. The representative of AMTA responded that AMTA will incorporate the corrections.

On the AMTA Newsletter, the representative of AMTA reported that it is being produced quarterly and 300 copies per edition is being circulated. AMTA plans to increase the frequency of production from two to three times per year, increase the number of copies circulated, and make the Newsletter available on-line. AMTA also suggested that the Working Group should arrange the production of a Travel Guide for use at trade shows, and arrange familiarization trips for travel agents, tour operators, and international media. On the familiarization trips, it was strongly recommended that airlines be requested to provide complimentary air tickets and that NTOs help in providing hotel accommodation to participants.

The representative of ESCAP acknowledged PATA's contribution to all initiatives aimed at enhancing awareness on GMS tourism, and thanked AMTA and TAT for its marketing efforts. He reported ESCAP's completed and planned initiatives in the area of tourism promotion and marketing, which include: (i) Seminar on Tourism Promotion in Lao PDR held in Vientiane on 27-28 July 1999; (ii) planned national level seminars on sustainable tourism development to be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 8-9 December 1999 and in Yangon, Myanmar in March 2000; and (iii) Seminar on Promotion of Buddhist Tourism Circuit to be held in Kisarazu, Japan in October 2000, in which ESCAP will invite the GMS countries.

The Meeting noted the following suggestions on GMS marketing activities: (i) publications, such as the AMTA Newsletter, should continue to include tips on sustainable tourism for both hosts and tourists; (ii) marketing activities/materials should show more "branding" of the GMS, such as "Jewels of the Mekong"; and (iii) the Mekong Tourism Map should explicitly distinguish heritage sites and natural attractions.

Program 2: Subregional Events

The representative of PATA announced that the Fourth Mekong Tourism Forum will be held at the Lao Plaza Hotel, Vientiane, Lao PDR on 28-30 November 1999. About 175 participants are expected to attend the Forum, which is being held during the "Visit Laos Year, 1999-2000". The theme of the Forum is "Gearing Up for the Future". The representative of PATA informed the Meeting that the Forum will adopt an interactive workshop-style format with breakout sessions by country and by sector. She thanked *Travel Trade Report* for providing publicity to the Forum and for producing the first Forum Daily. She also thanked the National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR for its support in organizing the Forum. The representative of ESCAP thanked PATA for organizing the Fourth Mekong Tourism Forum and ADB for providing financial support.

The representative of PATA confirmed that the Fifth Mekong Tourism Forum will be held at the Le Royal Hotel in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 6 to 8 April 2000. The Fifth Forum will immediately precede the PATA Travel Mart to be held in Singapore from 11 to 12 April 2000. A Mekong Report will be published by *Travel Trade Report* and presented at the Fifth Mekong Tourism Forum.

The venue of the Sixth Mekong Tourism Forum will be determined at the 11th Meeting of the Working Group to be held in Phnom Penh in April 2000.

Program 3: Training

The representative of ESCAP announced that ESCAP and TAT plan to organize a training program on tourism management for the GMS countries. Financing for three representatives from each of the GMS countries will be provided by ESCAP. He further reported on activities of the Network of Asia Pacific Education and Training Institutes in Tourism (APETIT) that was established by ESCAP in September 1997 to promote cooperation among tourism training institutes. For example, training initiatives are being undertaken with financial assistance from ESCAP between Thailand and PRC, and Thailand and Viet Nam on a reciprocating basis.

The representative of Thailand noted the successful outcome of the program for Training Experienced Tourism Trainers in Tourism Management Course held in March-April 1999 at the Mekong Institute. He welcomed ESCAP's support for continuing this training program. He proposed the inclusion of the effective use of the Internet as part of the course on tourism management to be jointly organized by ESCAP and TAT in 2000.

The representative of the Mekong Project Development Facility (MPDF) introduced her organization to the Meeting as a private sector development facility working in some of the GMS countries, and established by the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group. She expressed MPDF's willingness to provide assistance in basic supporting services, including tourism. MPDF would welcome suggestions on activities that the agency can support, especially in the area of training that is geared toward the private sector. She expressed interest in the work of APPETIT. The Meeting noted the offer from MPDF.

The representative of IUCN Viet Nam (World Conservation Union) noted that the Working Group through the World Tourism Organization has approached the European Union (EU) for funding of a training the trainers program. She informed the Meeting that the EU has a project in the pipeline on human resource development in Viet Nam.

The representative from Travel Impact Newswire proposed that tourism marketing be made part of training issues, especially for small- and medium-enterprises, in light of rapid changes in technology and globalization. The representative of PATA responded that various "how to ..." workshops that would address the need for training in tourism marketing as well as other training programs will be discussed at the Fifth Mekong Tourism Forum.

Program 4: Management of Natural and Cultural Resources

The representative of CUC UEM at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) presented three possible areas for training of resource managers in the GMS that could be financed under a Canadian Government-funded project based at AIT: (i) management of heritage resources; (ii) cultural tourism to develop cultural resource management expertise; and (iii) how to

present resources to tourists. Given the vast needs of training in this area, a basic needs assessment will be carried out. He requested the Working Group to indicate their interest in specific training areas and directions on how to conduct the training, including timing and length of the training.

The representative of UNESCO reported on the UNESCO's activities in management of natural and cultural resources with interface possibilities, including: the production of the *Impact* publication jointly with PATA; a project on *culture, heritage management and tourism - models for cooperation among stakeholders* that is developing and testing models for the preservation of heritage and development of tourism as a local resource; and an *Associated School Project* that will serve secondary school teachers to teach about World Heritage and the need for heritage protection.

Program 5: Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Development

The representative of ADB reported on the status of a proposed ADB regional technical assistance (RETA) for feasibility studies of Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Infrastructure Development. An ADB Fact-Finding Mission met with representatives of AMTA in early November 1999 to discuss the proposed project. A draft Aide Memoire containing the scope and terms of reference of the proposed ADB RETA was prepared by the ADB Mission and circulated to the GMS NTOs by AMTA for comments. AMTA will be the Executing Agency of the RETA with close collaboration from the NTOs. To facilitate approval of the RETA by ADB before year end, the NTOs were given until 30 November to provide their comments on, and/or confirmation of, the draft Aide Memoire. After receiving comments and/or confirmation, ADB will prepare and circulate a Memorandum of Understanding to each of the GMS countries to clarify their roles and responsibilities. The Chairman and the representative of AMTA reminded the NTOs to forward their comments and/or confirmation on or before the deadline. The representative of Thailand thanked ADB for the proposed RETA, and suggested that the feasibility study should cover all six river segments simultaneously, and explore ways to effectively implement priority projects. In the conduct of the RETA, he proposed that a representative of the Ministry of Finance of each country be consulted because the Ministry is responsible for mobilizing financial resources for the projects to be prioritized by the feasibility study.

The representative of ESCAP thanked ADB for financing the feasibility study on Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Infrastructure Development and noted that the importance of tourism infrastructure has been emphasized in previous Mekong Tourism Forums. He announced the holding of an Asia-Pacific Seminar on Public-Private Partnership in Tourism Development to be held in March 2000 in Bangkok that will be jointly organized by ESCAP, TAT and World Tourism Organization.

The representative of IUCN Viet Nam reported on a planned Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Project involving Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Viet Nam that could have linkages to the Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Development Project.

Program 6: Facilitation of Travel

The representative of AMTA informed the Meeting that a study on intra-ASEAN facilitation of travel will be presented at the ASEAN Tourism Forum to be held in Bangkok from 20 to 26 January 2000. He suggested that the Working Group make use of this Study in its work on travel facilitation within the GMS. He further noted that the Mekong Tourist map contains

information on travel facilitation, and requested the Working Group to inform AMTA on policy developments related to travel facilitation and on new overland routes in the GMS.

The Meeting noted the following developments related to travel facilitation as presented by the GMS delegations: (i) development of road transport infrastructure in Cambodia that is expected to improve subregional transport links; (ii) huge investments in airports and roads with subregional linkages in Yunnan Province, PRC; (iii) availability of visa on arrival and reduction of visa fees at Vientiane and Luang Prabang International Airports in Lao PDR; (iv) availability of border passes for GMS citizens to enter Lao PDR for a maximum stay of 15 days; (v) development of north-south and east-west transport links in Lao PDR, including signing of cross-border agreement between and among Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam to facilitate movement of goods and people along the East-West Transport Corridor; (vi) direct flights between Bangkok and Luang Prabang jointly provided by Bangkok Airways and Angel Airlines; (vii) opening of border checkpoints in Myanmar along the proposed Mae Sai-Tachilek-Kyaingtong-Mongla-Jinghong overland route; (viii) visa on arrival at Yangon International Airport provided advanced flight information is forwarded to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism; and (ix) a National Action Program for Viet Nam Tourism with the slogan "Viet Nam, a destination for the new millennium".

The representative of Thailand emphasized on the need to focus on an earlier agreement by the Working Group that assigns to each of the six NTOs planning responsibility for individually-designated overland routes to be coordinated by AMTA. He recalled an earlier proposal to use Route No. 9 (East-West Corridor) as a model for developing an itinerary for an overland route. The representative from ADB informed the Meeting that this proposal is consistent with an agreement at the Eighth GMS Ministerial Conference held in Manila, Philippines in October 1998 to use the East-West Corridor as a pilot project for the development of an economic corridor in the GMS. An economic corridor would link infrastructure developments with production, trade, investment, and tourism opportunities. An ADB technical assistance for a Pre-Investment Study on the East-West Corridor is about to be implemented.

The representative of AMTA informed the Meeting that an update of air transport linkages and overland routes in the GMS will be presented at the Fourth Mekong Tourism Forum.

On inquiry from the representative of Travel Impact Newswire, the representative from ADB confirmed that the recently-signed cross-border agreement to facilitate movement of goods and people along the East-West corridor would serve as a model agreement for GMS countries. Details of the agreement will be presented at the Fourth Mekong Tourism Forum.

Program 7: Village-Based Tourism

The representative of the CUC UEM at AIT presented a program of work and cooperation on village-based tourism being carried out within AIT's Tourism Destination Management Program funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. CUC UEM committed to the Thai and Vietnamese case studies, and are now committing to the country choices of Lao PDR and Cambodia for village-based tourism. Work plan for each community includes: (i) preparation of situational report for each community; (ii) conduct of a workshop to help communities develop an overall strategic destination management plan; (iii) production of manuals for interpreting the community for tourism, monitoring tourism development in the community and community tourism destination management; (iv) conduct of training, where necessary and in consultation with AMTA; (v) support of a Master's thesis on

monitoring based on Vietnamese and Thai cases; and (iv) providing AMTA with a series of conclusions and recommendations based on other items of work plan.

The representatives of Lao PDR and UNESCO reported that the Nam Ha Eco-Tourism Pilot Project in Lao PDR started in October 1999 with the establishment of a site office and assignment of staff. Activities are expected to start in December 1999. A newsletter will be prepared and circulated to those involved and interested in the project. The representatives of Lao PDR thanked the New Zealand Government for funding this project.

The representative of ESCAP highlighted the importance of village-based tourism in bringing socioeconomic benefits to local communities. He reported on a Workshop on Development of a National Ecotourism Strategy for Viet Nam organized by ESCAP, IUCN Viet Nam, and Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism on 7-9 September 1999 in Hanoi, Viet Nam.

Program 8: GMS Tourism Flows

The representative of ESCAP informed the Meeting of the outcome of the Seminar on Expansion of Tourism in the Greater Mekong Subregion through Improved Air Transport organized by ESCAP in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 28-30 July 1999. The Seminar was attended by representatives of NTOs and airlines, and officials from civil aviation agencies in the GMS countries. The Seminar considered measures to improve air linkages, promote cooperation among airlines, and institute safety among airlines. The country reports presented at the Seminar were featured in the November 1999 issue of the AMTA Newsletter.

Marketing Task Force

The representative of AMTA outlined the marketing activities planned by AMTA. These include: arranging familiarization trips from major markets; facilitating participation by GMS NTOs at regional trade shows, such as ASEAN Tourism Forum and PATA Travel Mart and preparation of GMS Travel Manual that will contain major tourist attractions, suggested itineraries, and relevant tourism contact addresses. The representative of AMTA presented the proposed GMS Travel Manual for 2000-2001, its objective, planned layout and design, cost estimates, expected contributions for financing, distribution, and timeframe. It was suggested that product type "branding" that is consistent with other tourism products be made evident in the Manual. It was also suggested that the cost of the Manual could be passed on to the other stakeholders of tourism marketing activities. The representative of Travel Impact Newswire proposed "GeMS of the GMS" as a possible theme of the Manual. The Meeting agreed in principle that the Manual be prepared under the direction of AMTA.

AMTA circulated at the Meeting a proposal for a marketing initiative that contains background, objectives, and marketing plan and promotional activities for the GMS. The Meeting agreed in principle with the proposal. The representatives of Thailand and AMTA reiterated the need to identify in each GMS country a focal point for marketing.

Strengthening Ownership

The ADB consultant presented a discussion paper to the meeting, which reviewed the past achievements of the Working Group and suggested new future directions. There is a wide variation in the depth of achievement in the various programs of the Working Group, reflecting the relative difficulty in attracting funding. It is a fair criticism that there has not been a systematic approach to seeking financing for projects/programs. A review of each

program was made, including the extent in which each program's objective was achieved. Except for the program on management of natural and cultural resources, the objectives of the other programs have been achieved in varying degrees.

The ADB consultant proposed possible new directions in regional marketing, subregional events, and other existing programs. Regional marketing provides a strong rationale for continuing tourism cooperation, and justifies the establishment of a strong professional marketing agency. AMTA might be able to serve this role. Funding for AMTA's marketing activities should eventually be shared by all the GMS NTOs. All the Working Group activities should be linked to the Mekong Tourism Forum, and PATA should be asked to continue organizing the Forum, with the help of AMTA. The Forum should seek to develop other regional events. ADB and ESCAP should stay associated with the Forum, but ADB's role as sponsor should be phased out. Besides regional marketing and regional tourism events, the Working Group should limit its direct involvement in implementing other types of tourism projects. It should publicize its program objectives and seek project ideas from donors, GMS government agencies, private sector groups, NGOs, etc. The Working Group should limit its role to one of quality control, endorsing those projects that would benefit the GMS as a whole. AMTA should consolidate its ability to facilitate implementation of major regional tourism projects.

The ADB consultant presented notes for discussion for possible new directions for the Working Group. Frequency of Working Group Meeting should be limited to once per year, and delegations to meetings should include head of NTOs and officials in marketing and planning. Financing of participation at Working Group Meetings should eventually be borne by the NTOs, although ESCAP should continue this role up to a fixed period of time. AMTA should help plan the agenda of the Working Group Meetings.

Discussion notes for possible new directions for AMTA was also presented. AMTA should not merely serve as secretariat to the Working Group, but should become a professional regional marketing organization that also organizes regional events and can help facilitate major regional tourism projects. AMTA staffing should involve co-opting marketing people from the NTOs on a fixed-period appointment. The position of AMTA Director should be rotated around the six countries, and should have a fixed term of two years. The Working Group should explore possible ADB and/or ESCAP technical assistance to help build technical capacity of AMTA.

The representative of ESCAP remarked that the amount to be saved from discontinuing the financing of participants at Working Group Meeting could be used to finance other GMS tourism programs or projects.

While decisions were not expected at the Meeting, the participants were asked about their views on the possible future directions of the Working Group, AMTA, and the programs, focusing on the following items: (i) ESCAP's continued financing of participants at Working Group Meetings; (ii) proposed once-per-year Meeting of the Working Group and participation of senior-level delegations from GMS countries; (iii) proposed strengthened role of AMTA, particularly to serve as regional marketing agency; and (iv) rotating directorship of AMTA. There was consensus that TAT should continue to provide the director and staffing of AMTA and that a gradual, step-by-step approach should be adopted in transforming AMTA into a full-fledged regional marketing organization as envisaged. Opinion was divided on the issue of ESCAP's continued financing of participants at Working Group Meetings. Majority of the Working Group members supported the proposed once-per-year Meeting and high-level participation from the GMS countries. The Meeting agreed to discuss

these issues and other related issues further at 11th Meeting of the Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector.

Date and Venue of the Next Meeting

The Meeting agreed that the 11th Meeting of the Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector will be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 6 to 8 April 2000.

Appreciation

The Meeting expressed appreciation to the National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting and the warm hospitality accorded to the participants. The Meeting also expressed gratitude to the Government of Japan for financing the travel of ESCAP-sponsored participants.

Adoption of the Report

The Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector was adopted on 30 November 1999.