



**TWENTY FIFTH MEETING OF THE GMS TOURISM WORKING GROUP (TWG-25)  
Siem Reap, Cambodia, 6 May 2010**

**SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Introduction**

1. The 25th Meeting of the GMS Tourism Working Group (TWG-25) was held in Siem Reap, Cambodia on 6 May 2010, attended by the representatives of the National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) of the six GMS countries (Cambodia, People's Republic of China-Yunnan Provincial Tourism Administration and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Tourism Administration, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam), the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO), development partners including ADB, SNV, French Embassy, GTZ, UNDP Cambodia, USAID and the Environment Operations Center. A list of participants is in Appendix 1.

**Agenda Item 1: Opening Session**

2. In his opening remarks, Mr. Tith Chanta, Director General, Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia, welcomed all the delegates to the Meeting. He noted that tourism is a key sector for socio-economic development. It is a key sector in many economic development programs and promotes friendship and cooperation among countries. He expressed his thanks to ADB and other development partners for their support to GMS economic cooperation, particularly to tourism sector cooperation.

3. Ms. Shireen Lateef, Director, Social Sectors Division, Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank, expressed appreciation to the Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia and MTCO for their efficient organization of the meeting. She extended her congratulations to MTCO Executive Director Mr. Mason Florence and his staff for successfully working with the Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia to revive the Mekong Tourism Forum in line with TWG's intensified drive to market and promote the GMS as a single tourism destination as the global economy recovers and new tourism development and investment opportunities open up along the GMS economic corridors. She also welcomed back Ms. Christine Jacquemin as MTCO Project Coordinator seconded by the French Government and now based at the ADB Cambodia Resident Mission, to move forward the tourism development agenda and progress efforts to mobilize development partner support to priority tourism projects. Ms. Lateef mentioned the ongoing preparation of a new GMS Strategic Framework for 2012-22 as a key deliverable for the 4<sup>th</sup> GMS Summit planned in 2011, and called upon TWG and MTCO to think of new strategic directions for the tourism sector beyond the current GMS Tourism Sector Strategy which ends in 2015. A copy of her remarks is in Appendix 2.

## **Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda**

4. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Tith Chantha, MOT, Director General of Tourism of the Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia, and co-chaired by Ms. Shireen Lateef, ADB.

5. The Meeting adopted the provisional agenda, copy in [Appendix 3](#).

## **Agenda Item 3: Business arrangements**

6. Cambodia as host informed the participants about the arrangements for the lunch and dinner hosted by the MOT. The 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 24<sup>th</sup> GMS Tourism Working Group Meeting, Hoi An Town, Viet Nam, by Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism**

7. Representative of Viet Nam briefed participants on the highlights and follow-up actions on items discussed at TWG-24 held in Hoi An town Viet Nam in November 2009, as follows:

- Requested MTCO to provide more details to the NTOs regarding the booking engines and present a list of hotels registered on WEGO at the next meeting;
- Agreed to expand GMS Years until 2015, Thailand to host in 2012, and Lao PDR in 2013;
- Agreed on the original logo for the Explore Mekong campaign with the slogan “Six Countries... One River”; requested MTCO to produce the logo in CD-Rom and send to NTOs to promote their local materials;
- Suggested that MTCO should prioritize its marketing activities and focus on main activities such as the Mekong Tourism Forum;
- Discussed MTCO administration issues; agreed that Thailand would collect MTCO Executive Director’s performance evaluation forms from NTOs and ADB as neutral party would consolidate; noted that MTCO Project Coordinator’s secondment was underway;
- Requested MTCO to revise proposed budget and prepare a one-year in house running cost for circulation before next TWG meeting
- Deferred decision on MTCO request for per diem rates.

## **Agenda Item 5: Implementation of GMS Tourism Sector Strategy**

### **5.1 Marketing Projects**

#### **5.1.1. International Tourism Arrivals 2009**

8. Mr. Mason Florence, MTCO Executive Director, reported on international tourism arrivals for 2009 covering Cambodia, PRC (Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang AR), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam which totalled 24.43 million, down from 2008 figures due to the impact of the global economic downturn. It is expected that the ongoing political crisis in Thailand would also negatively impact on tourism trends in the subregion.

### **5.1.3. Progress Report and 2010-2011 Work Plan by MTCO Executive Director**

9. Mr. Florence reported on the progress of tourism marketing and promotion initiatives. Unique visits to the Mekong Tourism website have been gradually increasing due to expansion of its database. Unique visits to the Explore Mekong website have also seen increasing trends, with the U.S., Russian Federation, and Thailand as the top 3 countries posting page views. MTCO Executive Director had several speaking engagements between January–April 2010. The Responsible Tourism website won the PATA gold award 2009, a second print edition is being considered to include PRC, Myanmar and Thailand. Further updates are being made on the Explore Mekong Campaign marketing website and the booking engine will be officially launched in June 2010. Future work includes expansion of user-generated content and social networking, revival of Mekong Photo Contest, and launching of the Great Mekong Giveaway promotion. Other promotional activities are planned including production of Mekong-branded collaterals. A GMS Travel map will be produced with interested partners, to contain comprehensive notes with cultural and historical information. Initial discussions are being made with Lao PDR regarding preparations for the Mekong Tourism Forum 2011 in conjunction with TWG-27. Mr. Florence also reported on his participation in a number of GMS and international tourism events held in November 2009-April 2010.

10. Concerning his work plan for June 2010 to May 2011, Mr. Florence has lined up the following key activities: monthly updating of the Explore Mekong campaign website, expansion of the campaign, participation in several events (Thailand Travel Mart Plus, PATA Travel Mart 2010, International Travel Expo 2010, China International Travel Mart 2010, ITB Asia, ASEAN Tourism Forum 2011), mobilization of funds from the German Government for MTCO International Marketing Coordinator, production of new Explore Mekong promotional items, organization of media familiarization trips (from Hanoi to Guangxi/Yunnan, from Chiang Rai to Yangon, from Bangkok to Ho Chi Minh City on Southern Coastal corridor, from Thailand to Vietnam via Lao PDR on the East-West Corridor), production of GMS Tourist Map, organization of Mekong Tourism Forum 2011, and organization of an Explore Mekong Road Show in Tokyo in collaboration with the ASEAN-Japan Center.

#### **Discussion**

11. The Chairman remarked that for Quarter 1 2010, international tourism arrivals are seeing some positive trends. He noted the substantial progress in MTCO's marketing programs and suggested for MTCO to put emphasis on Mekong-Japan cooperation. MOT of Cambodia has submitted a proposal to higher authorities for Cambodia to host the Visit GMS Year in 2011.

12. Myanmar suggested the need to intensify efforts to penetrate the European market and to get Japan to be interested in tourism-related activities in the GMS.

13. Regarding MTF 2011, Lao PDR indicated that if the other GMS countries would agree, they have no objection to the proposal for the next Forum to be held back-to-back with TWG-27 in 2011 in Lao PDR, possibly in Champassak Province.

14. At TWG's request, MTCO prepared a matrix showing the outlook for TWG and MTF schedules over the next 5 years.

15. The meeting noted the benefits derived from media familiarization trips in terms of media mileage generated to further promote tourism destinations in the GMS. Ms. Jacquemin suggested for MTCO to participate in regional sports events which could be a powerful

promotional activity. Ms. Lateef suggested that Guangxi should be more actively involved and drawn in, particularly with regard to media familiarization trips.

16. In response to a query from Mr. Alfredo Perdiguero, ADB, Mr. Florence stated that about 9,000 hotels are listed in the Wego system, the booking engine will be officially launched in June 2010 and is projected to generate annual revenues of about \$25,000 to be split between MTCO and WEGO.

17. Copies of reports under this agenda item are in Appendix 4.

## **5.2 Development Projects**

### **5.2.1 Progress report and 2010-2011 Work Plan by MTCO Project Coordinator**

18. Ms. Christine Jacquemin, MTCO Project Coordinator, gave a brief historical background on the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy, its priority programs and projects, the prioritization exercise done by TWG with MTCO's assistance that led to the endorsement of detailed tourism marketing and tourism development plans by the GMS Tourism Ministers and the Third GMS Summit in the context of the Vientiane Plan of Action endorsed by the GMS Leaders. She recalled the consultative process to jumpstart 4 priority projects (tourism and biodiversity conservation, pro-poor tourism with focus on private partnerships with local communities, HRD vocational training for SMEs, and inclusive tourism development along GMS economic corridors). Two donors' conferences were held (March 2009 in Bangkok, and May 2009 in Hanoi) but mobilization of funds has posed a big challenge due to unavailability of multilateral funding sources. In between contracts from July 2009 to January 2010, she resumed her activities in late January 2010. She suggested to explore potential support, particularly through parallel country programs currently or prospectively to be supported by bilateral and /or multilateral partners upon countries request. She distributed a comprehensive recapitulative table listing all tourism projects that could be recorded in the GMS and that can be related to the GMS TSS, and encouraged all to regularly provide inputs to help update the table for posting on the mekongtourism website.

19. For instance, for the tourism and biodiversity conservation project, potential funding may be available through the IUCN which has submitted a regional proposal (€2.3 million) to the EU covering Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam. EU response is expected by June 2010. Also the ADB-funded Sustainable Tourism Development Project (STDP) in Viet Nam includes some components related to this project. For the pro-poor tourism project, EU Viet Nam has submitted a proposal (€12 million) for a 5-year environmentally sustainable and socially responsible project, MOT of Cambodia and ADB are exploring the possibility to seek financing from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction to support a pro-poor tourism project in Cambodia, and STDP in Viet Nam and Lao PDR includes some components related to this project. For the HRD vocational training for SMEs project, EU Viet Nam has completed a 5-year project (€12 million) on training trainers and vocational training organizations, Lux Development is engaged in a 5-year project (€5 million) in Lao PDR, STDP in Lao PDR and Viet Nam includes some ad hoc training of trainers, and in process is AFD Cambodia's feasibility study for the creation of a school hotel. For the tourism development in GMS economic corridors project, ADB-funded STDP in Lao PDR and Viet Nam is supporting work on EWEC and NSEC (\$2.1 million). On top of these project funding efforts and technical and coordination work with different stakeholders for redefinition of projects, the MTCO Project Coordinator is continuing work on the further improvement of the website ([www.mekongtourism.org](http://www.mekongtourism.org)) for promoting sustainable tourism in the

region, and as a knowledge center for disseminating information and encouraging good practices.

Ms. Jacquemin's work plan for the period June 2010-May 2011 will focus on 5 core groups of planned activities, namely (i) **Consolidate**: pursue fund raising activities for the 4 priority projects and build up the foundations for their eventual implementation; (ii) **Expand** GMS TSS implementation with the start up of 2 new projects and provide ad hoc assistance to the countries upon request; (iii) **Coordinate** and monitor implementation of STDP regional outreach components and of the 4 priority projects; (iv) **Share and Inform**: redevelop mekongtourism website into an efficient knowledge center on sustainable tourism, tool for sharing information, and window for private investors in the region; and (v) **Advocate** and organise tourism networks consisting of responsible operators and donors at national and regional levels. Detailed activities are planned under each of the 5 core activities. All development activities proposed for 2010-2011 are included in the chronological consolidated work plan that was sent in advance to the TWG for validation. The TWG is kindly asked to decide which projects out of the three suggested Project 11, 13, and or 16 Ms. Jacquemin shall be working on during the next 12 months.

## Discussion

20. Representative of SNV noted that until the legal status of MTCO is resolved/addressed, it would be difficult for MTCO to generate/mobilize funding from development partners.

21. Ms. Lateef remarked, and Mr. Perdiguero agreed, that MTCO is the TWG secretariat, and while MTCO would be helping GMS countries in raising funds for projects, development partner funds are not expected to go directly to MTCO, unless the partners themselves would like to fund MTCO operations.

22. Ms. Jacquemin remarked that MTCO could assist GMS NTOs and interested partners in designing country projects that would complement priority projects under the TSS, but that it could not pursue its activities without a minimum of resources (i.e., budget and administrative assistance), required to pursue activities such as the organisation of seminars and writing of proposals. Moreover, on some projects MTCO has been designated in the GMS TSS as the lead organisation, and as such is supposed to conduct and supervise its implementation. The role of the Project Coordinator is not limited to fund raising but mainly to provide technical assistance and support to the countries in the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the projects.

23. Representative of Cambodia confirmed that there are plans to establish initially a tourism vocational training center which is being supported by the French government. Eventually a National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality would be set up in conformance with the newly enacted Tourism Law.

24. Mr. Steven Schipani, ADB, recalled that under the Mekong Tourism Development Project, participating countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam) organized training courses where the other GMS countries participated. Under the ongoing Sustainable Tourism Development Project, participating countries Lao PDR and Viet Nam will also organize training courses open to participation by the other GMS countries and which the other development partners could consider supporting.

25. Ms. Lateef noted that TWG would need to eventually decide on Ms. Jacquemin's plan to develop 2 new projects even as the 4 projects earlier developed have not yet been implemented. She noted further that STDP is supporting some aspects of the 4 projects.

26. Representative of Myanmar remarked that although they do not lead any of the TSS projects, they would be pleased to be involved in the common projects. Myanmar is still seeking support to its proposal submitted earlier to TWG on Training on Development and Management of Community-based Tourism.

27. Representative of Viet Nam noted that there have been discussions with Lao PDR towards identifying activities under STDP that they could do together, including development of tourism corridors along EVEC, training managers of protected areas, and training of trainers for SMEs. The Chairman requested MTCO to work with STDP participating countries to pursue this plan.

28. Representative of Yunnan Province would like to get guidance from MTCO on how to proceed towards expanding the coverage of the Responsible Tourism Guide, to include PRC. They also requested MTCO's assistance regarding their plan to publish the completed route plans for distribution to the public. PRC also seeks support from MTCO and development partners with regard to training programs planned at the Guilin Tourism College which other GMS countries could attend.

29. UNDP Cambodia representative noted that TWG serves as an effective knowledge platform for energizing development partner support. UNDP support to tourism activities is focused at the national level, and they would be interested to know how TWG is connected to existing national institutional mechanisms.

30. Mr. Putu Kamayana, ADB Cambodia Resident Mission, clarified that National Tourism Organizations are represented in the TWG and are therefore working to ensure synergy with national programs.

31. Ms. Jacquemin added that part of MTCO's work has been to encourage such synergies and/or complementarities by organising tourism network meetings -and gathering all stakeholders involved in tourism activities to use common grounds and build up on them, but that at the institutional level, it was the role of the NTOs to link the different institutional mechanisms.

32. Ms. Lateef noted that while the mechanism for coordination exists, TWG should not lose sight of the common goal to promote the GMS as a single tourism destination and that this is the common element that binds the 29 projects in the TSS.

33. Representative of GTZ remarked that they have a very national point of view and that it is not clear to them how MTCO can facilitate regional projects.

34. Mr. Perdiguero responded that it is fully understood that donors are focused on national projects. He cited the example of STDP which will organize training programs in protected areas in Viet Nam in which the 6 GMS countries will participate. Development partners could consider tapping country-based programs to support national participants in regional training programs.

## **5.2.2 Project updates by MTCO and lead countries; Updates on border checkpoints by NTOs**

35. Ms. Jacquemin circulated a detailed report on updates on GMS TSS related projects and required follow-up actions as shown in Appendix 5.

36. Representative of Cambodia reported on the Southern Tourism Corridor and recalled that a meeting was organized in 2007 with representatives of Cambodia, Thailand, and Viet Nam. It

was agreed that Thailand would host the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting but to date, the meeting has not yet taken place and Thailand's confirmation is requested. International tourism arrivals in Cambodia in 2009 totalled 2.16 million representing an increase of 2% from 2008. In Quarter 1 of 2010, arrivals increased by 10% compared to the same period in 2009, and are projected to increase by 10% for the whole year of 2010. There are 19 international border checkpoints with neighboring countries and 2 international airports (Phnom Penh and Siem Reap). Visa on arrival is available in the international airports and most of the international border checkpoints.

37. Representative of Yunnan Province Tourism Administration, PRC, reported that international tourist arrivals reached 2.84 million covering overnight tourists and excluding one-day visitors, representing an increase of 13.76% compared to 2008 and generating revenues of US \$ 1 billion, up by 16.6%. Domestic tourists to Yunnan numbered 120 million in 2009, up by 17.3%. Gross Incomes from tourism amounted to CYN81.07 billion, up by 22.2%. Yunnan is taking the lead for 2 projects: (i) Golden Quadrangle Area; and (b) Shangri-la - Tengchong – Myitkyina Tourism Development Zone (Western Yunnan – Northern Myanmar Tourism Zone). On the Golden Quadrangle Tourism Zone, cross-border travel route plan has been completed. Two Yunnan (Xishuangbanna) Tourism Image Shops were established in Houayxay of Laos and Chiang Rai of Thailand. The 4th Session of Cooperation Meeting between Yunnan and Northern Provinces of Laos was held successfully in Jinghong in June, 2009. The tourist bus route linking Jinghong, Houayxay and Chiang Khon was officially opened in October 2009. The flight route linking Kunming, Jinghong and Bangkok was opened in January 2010. The first meeting of cooperation between Yunnan (Xishuangbanna), Louang Prabang, Bokeo, Louang Namtha Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai was held in Jinghong in March 2010 where the six parties signed an MOU. Lao Airlines now services flight route linking Vientiane, Louang Prabang and Jinghong starting April 2010. In March 2010, the TAT and Chiang Mai Tourism Association led a big scale “Kunming-Bangkok Self-Driving Cars Delegation” of 130 members to visit Jinghong and Kunming and hosted tourism promotion activities. In April-May 2010, Yunnan Province organized tourism marketing promotion activities in Louang Prabang, Lao PDR. With regard to the Shangri-la - Tengchong – Myitkyina Tourism Development Zone (Western Yunnan – Northern Myanmar Tourism Zone), cross-border travel route plan has been finished. In August 2009, the Gan Bye Dee Port inspection building which was supported and built by the Chinese Government (grant of CYN3.5 million) was officially turned over to Myanmar, marking the opening of Houqiao port in China and the Gan Bye Dee port in Myanmar. The self-driving tourist route between Tengchong and Myitkyina was officially opened in September 2009. In December 2009, the “China-Myanmar Borders Economic and Trade Fair” was held in Ruili City.

38. Representative of Guangxi Tourism Administration, PRC, reported that since December 2008 and with the support of the China National Tourism Administration, 4 batches of tourism professionals from Viet Nam, Lao PDR, and Cambodia have been trained at the Guilin Institute of Tourism, with funding from the Guangxi local government amounting to over US\$200,000. In addition, field visits by trainees from GMS countries were arranged to selected tourist destinations to learn about their management. The Guangxi Tourism Administration, Guilin Institute of Tourism, and other education and research institutions are willing and ready to further contribute to tourism development of the GMS countries. A bilateral agreement between Guangxi and Viet Nam has been signed covering cooperation in development of heritage sites. Guilin has not yet hosted a TWG meeting and looks forward to hosting one in the future.

39. Representative of Lao PDR reported that there were 2.008 million tourist arrivals in 2009, and there are now 21 border checkpoints with Thailand, PRC, Viet Nam and Myanmar. Visa-free access is extended to ASEAN countries, except Indonesia, and visa on arrival is given with allowance for extension. In 2009, there were 2.8 million tourist arrivals, representing a 15% increase compared to 2008. SNV is supporting the development of the Northern Heritage route

Program which aims to contribute to poverty reduction in target countries through increased tourism revenues. A feasibility study is now being prepared in relation to Project 24 of the TSS: Lao PDR-Viet Nam Cross-border Community-based Tourism Zone.

40. Representative of Myanmar reported that they are still waiting for positive response to their proposed Training on Development and Management of Community-based Tourism. Myanmar is encouraging entrepreneurs to develop projects in various tourism destinations. In 2009, Myanmar received 762,000 tourists by air and land border routes with neighboring countries, with Asia representing 70% share of the market. Quarter 1 of 2010 has seen a 30% growth and Myanmar's Immigration Department has recently announced visa on arrival at international airports for all countries around the world. Foreign independent tourists still cannot enter at land borders.

41. Representative of Thailand reported that the proposal on Promoting Responsible Heritage Tourism for the GMS Project was submitted to UNESCO. However, in order to get UNESCO support, Thailand needs to get endorsement letters from the other GMS countries. Thailand has 22 border checkpoints with neighboring countries and 5 international airports, and 80% of tourist arrivals are from the international airports while 20% are from border checkpoints. Earlier projections were 15.5 million tourism arrivals in 2010; however, the prevailing domestic political situation may negatively affect international tourism arrivals to drop to 14 million.

42. Representative of Viet Nam reported 3.8 million international visitors in 2009, and 1.4 million arrivals in Quarter 1 of 2010 – representing a 36% increase compared to the same period last year, with projection of 4.2 million arrivals for 2010. There are 20 international border checkpoints with neighboring countries and Viet Nam is trying to improve the image of these checkpoints by reducing administrative procedures, building new roads, and improving transportation regulation system for tourist vehicles entering Viet Nam.

#### **Discussion:**

43. Representative of EOC mentioned their collaboration with MTCO in developing a project in the Golden Quadrangle Area which has been endorsed by the GMS Working Group on Environment – paving the way for TWG-WGE collaboration. A pool of national consultants will be set up soon to implement the project.

44. In response to a suggestion from Mr. Perdiguero regarding harmonization of tourism statistics and their dissemination, Ms. Jacquemin remarked that this is already being done and consolidated statistics are posted in the MTCO website, but further work needs to be done to refine these statistics by initiating stakeholders consultation to start up GMS TSS Project 16 with partners such as PATA and UNWTO.

#### **Decision:**

45. On the proposed project Promoting Responsible Heritage Tourism for the GMS initiated by Thailand, the Meeting requested Ms. Jacquemin to prepare and circulate a letter of endorsement to be signed by the GMS countries, and thereafter forward it to Thailand for submission to UNESCO.

### **5.2.3 Interventions by Development Partners**

46. Representative of UNDP Cambodia briefed the meeting on a Joint Programme on Culture and Development – Cambodia Creative Industries Support involving joint collaboration among ILO, UNDP, FAO, and UNESCO. There are 3 key expected outcomes: (i) preserve and develop Cambodia's cultural heritage and living art; (ii) improve employment opportunities and income generation in the creative industries; and (iii) improve commercialization of local cultural products and services. The project, being implemented from September 2008 to September 2011, has a budget of \$3.3 million and targets 4 provinces in Cambodia. The project is expected to ultimately contribute to the preservation and promotion of Cambodia's diverse culture, the strengthening of the link between heritage, tourism, and way of life, and better integration of remote provinces and their communities in the national economy.

47. Representative of SNV reported on their One Mekong - Two Cross-border Destinations – Three Countries initiative with focus on capacity building, hand-in-hand with the national governments, the private sector, and NGOs in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam. They are working in 2 key areas: (i) sustainable destination development and management which is supporting the establishment of successful, sustainable, and more inclusive destinations; and (ii) responsible business in tourism which is facilitating the integration of environmentally, economically, and socially responsible practices into private sector operations. Activities are very much in line with the GMS TSS. In Lao PDR, they are working on the Northern Heritage Route - which is in line with GMS TSS Project 24 - Preserving Culture, Promoting Income (the program includes marketing, product development, supporting tourism supply chains, human resource development, and provincial collaboration); and Mekong Discovery Trail – Pro-poor Sustainable Tourism. In Viet Nam, they are working on the Northern Highlands Trail – Nature's Drama Unfolds at Every Turn (the program includes policy, product development, human resource development, and marketing). In Cambodia, they are working on the Mekong Discovery Trail – which is in line with GMS TSS Project 17 - River Life Adventures in Northeast Cambodia. The Mekong Discovery Trail is located in Northeast Cambodia stretching 190 km from Kratie town to Cambodia Lao PDR border and is positioned as an ecotourism trail which provides a unique opportunity to experience authentic Mekong River life in diverse ways. It is being promoted as a soft adventure destination which is rich in terms of biodiversity, history and culture. Development of the Trail also aims to contribute to improving the lives of the communities in the target area.

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

## **Agenda Item 6: New Strategic Directions for the Tourism Sector**

### **6.1 Preparation of GMS Tourism Sector Strategy Mid-term Assessment**

49. Ms. Christine Jacquemin introduced a proposed framework for the mid-term assessment of the first 4 years (2006-2009) of implementation of the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy (TSS) and suggested a number of additional questions to be addressed in order to assess the work done so far and improve further the efficiency of implementation of the GMS TSS. Due to time constraints, she did not make the presentation but invited TWG members and development partners to communicate their comments and additional inputs to her.

## **6.2 New GMS Strategic Framework 2012-2022: Inputs from Tourism Sector**

### **6.2.1 Preparation of a New GMS Strategic Framework**

50. Mr. Pradeep Srivastava, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, Regional Cooperation and Integration Group, Southeast Asia Department, ADB, recalled the vision, goal, and strategic thrusts of the GMS Strategic Framework for 2002-2012 adopted in 2001. He briefed the meeting about preparations now being made to develop a new long-term GMS Strategic Framework for 2012-2022 which would need to take into account the progress made to date – including the findings and recommendations of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) done in 2007, the rapid changes in the global and regional environment and their implications on the Mekong subregion and the GMS Program, and appropriate changes that need to be made on how the GMS Program is to be organized and managed into its third decade in operation. He recalled that the MTR concluded that the tourism sector had succeeded in putting the GMS in the global tourism map, building close alliances and strong partnerships with key development partners, strengthening country ownership and generating high-level support from no less than the GMS Tourism Ministers, and established its secretariat - the MTCO funded by member countries themselves. Important milestones have been achieved vis-a-vis the MTR recommendations including the endorsement by the Tourism Ministers of detailed tourism marketing and development plans to guide the implementation of the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy, the development of priority project proposals to jumpstart TSS implementation, the preparation of a GMS Tourism Cooperation Manual, and the intensification of tourism marketing and promotion efforts including the recent revival of the Mekong Tourism Forum. Looking forward, the tourism sector will need to address challenges including impediments to facilitating cross-border movement of international tourists, linking historic sites and heritage destinations, and the impact of climate change on tourism assets.

51. Mr. Srivastava stressed the need to get insights from the TWG and its development partners on possible new strategic directions for the tourism sector beyond the current Tourism Strategy. These insights would serve as guideposts for initially outlining and subsequently defining in broad strokes the strategic focus of subregional cooperation in tourism in the new decade. The new GMS Strategic Framework will need to seriously consider how best to strengthen the institutional effectiveness and impact of subregional cooperation in general and of the tourism sector in particular. He mentioned that following a series of country consultations, the initial draft of the new GMS Strategic Framework will be discussed at the 16<sup>th</sup> GMS Ministerial Conference in August 2010.

### **6.2.2 Suggestions from TWG Heads of Delegations on Possible New Strategic Directions for the Tourism Sector**

52. The Chairman remarked that tourism plays an important role in promoting the 3Cs of the GMS Program, although much work remains to be done with respect to maximizing physical connectivity in order to facilitate access of more tourists to tourist destinations.

53. Mr. Perdiguero noted that the next GMS Summit could decide that the tourism sector would no longer be a priority sector under the GMS Program or it could happen that tourism could be given higher priority. While ADB believes that tourism is worth supporting, this will not be enough and the countries will need to articulate to their Leaders the importance of the tourism sector themselves.

54. Ms. Lateef suggested for TWG to think about second generation tourism cooperation beyond the current programs. TWG will need to think about how to deliver the benefits of regional economic integration to the communities, particularly the benefits that the tourism sector

can deliver, how infrastructure investments could help to diversify tourism benefits, and how to convince the GMS Leaders that tourism remains to be a valid sector for cooperation.

55. Mr. Srivastava noted that one of the things TWG could consider is how increased intra-GMS tourism goes hand-in-hand with increased mobility of people and goods that could drive tourism revenues to benefit households in the long run.

56. Mr. Perdiguero suggested for TWG to look closely at the limitations of the current program and to determine what the new focus of TWG should be, and to do away with duplication and overlaps with initiatives that are already being done by ASEAN.

57. Thailand suggested that the framework should create some specific or concrete activities as it was currently just about the common idea.

### **6.3 Update on Advancement of ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan**

58. Prof. Dr. Walter Jamieson, College of Innovation, Thammasat University, Thailand, presented progress of work being done to prepare the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) for 2011-2015 with support from the USAID-funded ACE project. He cited several challenges in developing the ATSP such as developing Southeast Asian innovative and creative specific solutions and approaches, ensuring that the ATSP aligns with the plans and action of various subregional groups including the GMS, dealing with the varying levels of capacity and resources in the region, and recognizing the scarce human and financial resources for ATSP implementation. He outlined the institutional structure of the ASEAN Tourism Working Group and its Task Forces that are working on the strategic directions and involved in detailed action planning. The Plan will be based on the following overarching principles: (i) Integrated and Structured Tourism Development; (ii) Sustainable and Responsible Development; (iii) Stakeholder Collaboration; (iv) Quality Tourism Product; (v) Service Excellence; and (vi) Distinctive and Interactive Experience. It envisions that *“By 2015, Southeast Asia will continue to develop as a competitive sustainable world-class destination promoting diverse and authentic experiential tourism products and experiences within a spirit of cooperation.”* Three main thrusts will be pursued: (i) Develop experiential regional products and creative marketing and investment strategies; (ii) Strategically increase the quality of services and human resources in the region; and (iii) Encourage travel facilitation and ASEAN connectivity. Various partners and stakeholders will be involved including dialogue partners, subregional groups, ASEAN Centers, private sector, multilateral funding agencies, UN Agencies, and NGOs. Final draft is to be ready in October 2010, for approval by ASEAN Ministers in January 2011.

#### **Discussion:**

59. Mr. Florence noted the challenge posed by software issues and the reality that the facilitation of cross-border movement of people/tourists still requires more work to be done.

60. Mr. Perdiguero remarked that ATSP is very timely especially in light of the preparation of the new GMS Strategic Framework. He noted that there are a few areas where clear delineation of responsibilities between ASEAN and GMS should be drawn. For example, work on the ASEAN single visa for outside tourists coming into the region could be out of GMS scope. On the other hand, GMS has clear, well-positioned comparative advantage in terms of tourism infrastructure development that is bringing in benefits to the rural poor. He stressed that marketing strategy should not confuse the market and noted that promoting GMS as a single destination makes more sense than promoting ASEAN as a single destination. ATSP and the

GMS tourism strategy should complement each other, and the GMS strategy should not compete but rather support the bigger ASEAN picture.

61. Representative of Myanmar stressed the need to look at measures to control the negative effects of tourism, promote safety and security aspects not only for tourists but also for the host country, and address disparity among member countries.

62. Dr. Jamieson clarified that ATSP is expected to stress that the negative impacts of tourism (e.g., trafficking, sex tourism) are minimized, that it would emphasize a responsible approach so that safety, security, and sanitation are effectively addressed. Recognizing that disparities exist among member countries, there are member economies that could help in bringing up the level of competency of the other members through sharing of resources, expertise, and information.

63. Representative of PRC suggested to include in the ATSP the promotion of ASEAN-PRC cooperation in tourism. Dr. Jamieson responded that this could be pursued under the existing ASEAN + 3 mechanism.

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

#### **Agenda Item 7: Date and venue of the next TWG meeting**

65. Mr. Florence presented a scheme of TWG and MTF host rotation to the Meeting. The table was initially prepared by MTCO and was adjusted by Mr. Schipani. The Meeting agreed that the table was very useful for future planning. A copy of the table is in [Appendix 7](#).

66. The Meeting agreed to hold the 26<sup>th</sup> TWG Meeting in PRC. Details on dates and venue will be communicated to TWG and MTCO by PRC as soon as possible.

#### **Agenda Item 10: Consideration and adoption of the report**

67. The summary of proceedings will be prepared by the GMS Secretariat and MTCO. The first draft will be submitted to the NTOs for comments within one week after the Meeting.

#### **Closing Session**

68. Mr. Tith Chantha, Director General of Tourism of Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia, the Chairman thanked all the participants for their active contribution and support to the meeting and wished everyone a pleasant stay in Siem Reap.

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1\_TWIG25 List of participants

Appendix 2\_Opening Remarks by Shireen Lateef

Appendix 3\_Agenda

Appendix 4.1\_TWIG-25 GMS Marketing Projects by Mason Florence

Appendix 4.2\_MTCO Proposed Annual Work plan for both marketing and development activities by MF & CJ

Appendix 5.1\_PROJECT UPDATE MAY 2010 by Christine Jacquemin

Appendix 5.2\_ACTIVITY REPORT by Christine Jacquemin

Appendix 5.3\_Action Plan 2010-11 by Christine Jacquemin

Appendix 5.4\_Update Report on Yunnan GMS Tourism Projects under GMS Tourism Strategy by YPTA

Appendix 5.5\_Joint Programme on Culture and Development by UNDP Cambodia

Appendix 5.6\_One Mekong - Two Cross-border Destinations – Three Countries initiative by SNV

Appendix 6.1\_strategic directions by Christine Jacquemin

Appendix 6.2\_Table E1. GMS TSS design & monitoring Framework

Appendix 6.3\_TWIG-25\_GMS Strategy\_Discussion Note by Flor

Appendix 6.4\_GMS NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2012-2022 by Pradeep

Appendix 6.5\_ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2011-2015 by Prof.Dr.Walter Jamieson

Appendix 7 steven.proposal\_TWIG\_MTF\_Host\_Rotation\_Scheme