



**Greater Mekong Subregion
Statement of the Second Meeting of the
Joint Committee for the Cross-Border Transport Agreement**

Preamble

We, the members of the Joint Committee for the *Agreement between and among the Governments of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for Facilitation of the Cross-Border Transport of Goods and People* (referred to as "the Agreement"), met in Beijing, the People's Republic of China for the Second Meeting of the Joint Committee on 20 March 2007. We were pleased to be joined in our discussions by the Director General of the Southeast Asia Regional Department of the Asian Development Bank ("ADB").

At our inception meeting in Phnom Penh on 30 April 2004, we agreed on our terms of reference and established our sub-committees for transport, customs, health inspection (sanitary/ phytosanitary and quarantine), and immigration, which serve as the institutional mechanisms for implementing the Agreement, and promoting effective and sustainable measures to facilitate transport and trade in the Greater Mekong Subregion. We also formally declared the entry into force of the Agreement and resolved to expeditiously finalize all annexes and protocols to the Agreement.

With the growing importance of global and regional trade in accelerating economic growth and reducing poverty, we are committed to promote and accelerate measures to facilitate transport and trade between and among our countries through the full and effective implementation of the Agreement. With the anticipated completion of key sections of transport corridors linking our countries in the next few years, the implementation of the Agreement will be crucial in transforming these corridors into economic corridors.

Achievements and Challenges

We are greatly encouraged by the appreciation expressed by our Leaders during the Second GMS Summit held in Kunming, the People's Republic of China on 4-5 July 2005, on, among other things, the considerable progress in negotiating the annexes and protocols to the Agreement and the commencement of its implementation.

With the dedicated efforts of our National Transport Facilitation Committees ("NTFCs"), and abiding by our Leaders' instructions "to complete the negotiations of the remaining annexes and protocols by the end of 2005 and to move with speed and purpose to implement the Agreement at an increasing number of border crossings," we were pleased that all the annexes and protocols to the Agreement have now been finalized and signed, and that the initial implementation commenced on 30 June 2005 at the Dansavanh-Lao Bao border crossing points between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. We expect the commencement of the Agreement's initial implementation at Mukdahan-Savannakhet and Hekou-Lao Cai by December 2007.

We are grateful for the continued support from the ADB. ADB has been instrumental in facilitating the negotiations, assisting in addressing difficult issues, and providing technical expertise, all of which have significantly contributed to the early finalization of the annexes and protocols, and successful commencement of the Agreement's initial implementation.

Although significant progress has been made, much more remains to be done to remove nonphysical barriers to the cross-border movement of goods and people in the Subregion. We are committed to working towards the expeditious completion of our respective domestic legal procedures

(i.e., ratification and/or acceptance) necessary for the entry into force of the annexes and protocols to Agreement, which contain the details to implement transport and trade facilitation measures. We recognize that this will require a concerted effort among relevant ministries and agencies in our respective countries.

Another key challenge is the need to develop the necessary capacities. The effective implementation of the Agreement and its annexes and protocols will require further capacity building at the central, local and border levels. In line with international best practices and anticipated expansion in cross-border traffic, we envisage the need to establish modern border management systems, including the provision of appropriate information and communications technology.

The Joint Committee Action Plan

Consistent with the GMS tradition, we shall build on our achievements, and, strengthened by the groundswell of goodwill among our countries, we will strive to accelerate our efforts to assist in jointly addressing the key challenges to, and lay the groundwork for, the full and effective implementation of the Agreement. In light of these challenges and our collective spirit to move with speed and purpose, we shall endeavor to carry out the following Action Plan:

- By end of 2007, formulation of comprehensive and well-coordinated national action plans for the implementation of the Agreement and its annexes and protocols.
- By the Third GMS Summit in 2008, ratification or acceptance of all the annexes and protocols to the Agreement, and commencement of implementation of the national action plans.
- By end of 2008, commencement of the initial implementation of the Agreement in at least seven key border crossing points and their associated routes and corridors.
- By end of 2010, commencement of full implementation of the Agreement and its annexes and protocols, along priority GMS corridors.
- By end of 2010, formulation of sustainable subregional institutional coordination arrangements to monitor and oversee the full implementation of the Agreement and its annexes and protocols.

We strongly encourage key officials of relevant ministries and agencies concerned to mainstream the relevant provisions of the Agreement into their operations. We instruct our senior NTFC officials to monitor the Action Plan, and bring to our immediate attention any issues that may arise in the course of its implementation.

We request ADB to continue providing much needed technical support and overall coordination arrangements necessary to ensure the realization of the CBTA Action Plan. We also request ADB to assist in mobilizing support to this end from other development partners.

We believe that the effective and sustainable implementation of the Agreement provides a strong foundation for the GMS pillars of enhancing connectivity, improving competitiveness, and building a greater sense of community. Through this, we will contribute to our shared goal of a prosperous, integrated, and harmonious Greater Mekong Subregion.

We express our appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of China for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Second Meeting of the Joint Committee.

Endorsement

This Statement of the Second Meeting of the Joint Committee for the Cross-Border Transport Agreement was endorsed at Beijing on 20 March 2007 by members of the Joint Committee, namely: His Excellency Tram Iv Tek, Secretary of State, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Royal Government of Cambodia; His Excellency Weng Mengyong, Vice Minister of Communications, Government of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Sommad Pholsena, Minister of Communication, Transport, Post and Construction, Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic; His Excellency Thura Thaug Lwin, Deputy Minister of Rail Transportation, Government of the Union of Myanmar; His Excellency Sansern Wongcha-um, Deputy Minister of Transport, Government of the Kingdom of Thailand; and His Excellency Tran Doan Tho, Vice Minister of Transport, Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam