

**Greater Mekong Subregion
Cross-Border Transport Agreement
Inception Meeting of the Joint Committee
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
30 April 2004**

REPORT

I. Introduction

1. The Inception Meeting (the Meeting) of the Joint Committee for the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Cross-Border Transport Agreement (GMS Agreement) was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 30 April 2004. The Meeting was jointly organized by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
2. The objectives of the Meeting were to: (i) establish the Joint Committee and Subcommittees on transport, customs, health inspection, and immigration; (ii) declare the entry into force of the GMS Agreement; and (iii) endorse the Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee and Subcommittees. The Meeting Program is attached as Appendix 1.
3. The participants of the Meeting consisted of Vice/Deputy Ministers of the Ministries of Transport and delegations from the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and ADB staff and consultants. The list of participants is attached as Appendix 2.
4. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Tram Iv Tek, Secretary of State (Vice Minister) of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Mr. Paul V. Turner, Director, Operations Coordination (GMS) Division, Mekong Department, ADB, co-chaired the Meeting.

II. Inaugural Session

5. His Excellency Mr. Cham Prasidh, Minister of Commerce and GMS Minister for Cambodia, welcomed the participants of the Meeting. He recalled the GMS Summit vision of a "prosperous, dynamic, and equitable subregion free of poverty and committed to protecting the environment that is vital to the subregion's well being". He echoed the milestones agreed by the 12th GMS Ministerial Meeting in Dali in September 2003, which included the completion of major transport corridors linking the subregion, and the full implementation of the GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement, including single-stop, single-window inspection procedures. He highlighted that all six GMS countries have signed the Agreement, and have committed to finalize the Agreement, and its annexes and protocols by 2005. His Excellency Mr. Cham Prasidh cited the important role of the Joint Committee and its subcommittees in ensuring the orderly and effective implementation of the Agreement and its annexes and protocols, and the pivotal role of ADB, which will serve as the secretariat to the Joint Committee and its subcommittees. He concluded his statement by formally opening the Inception Meeting of the Joint Committee.
6. In his statement, Mr. Shyam Bajpai, Country Director, ADB Resident Mission in Cambodia, underscored the importance of cross-border transport facilitation in supporting the three strategic objectives of the GMS Program of enhanced connectivity, increased

competitiveness, and a greater sense of community. He congratulated the GMS countries for the significant progress they made in facilitating cross-border transport, including ratifying the Agreement and finalizing annexes and protocols in Stage 1. Mr. Bajpai expressed the need to sustain and accelerate further the momentum in moving toward the full implementation of the Agreement, and enjoined the Joint Committee members to be “champions” of cross-border transport facilitation in the GMS countries. He expressed the hope that the Joint Committee will assist in achieving the following milestones: (i) finalization of all the remaining annexes and protocols by 2005, (ii) ratification of all annexes and protocols by 2006, and (iii) full implementation of the Agreement and its annexes and protocols by 2007.

7. The statements of H.E. Mr. Cham Prasidh and Mr. Shyam Bajpai are attached as Appendix 3.

III. Statements of the Vice/Deputy Ministers of Transport of the GMS Countries

8. Statements were delivered by the following Vice/Deputy Ministers of Transport of the GMS countries: H.E. Tram Iv Tek, Cambodia; H.E. Hu Xijie, PRC; H.E. Sommad Pholsena, Lao PDR; H.E. Thura U Thaung Lwin, Myanmar; H.E. Nikorn Chamnong, Thailand; and H.E. Pham The Minh, Viet Nam. The Vice/Deputy Ministers highlighted the importance of the GMS Cross-Border Agreement in the promotion of subregional economic cooperation, in general, and, in particular, in maximizing the benefits of subregional transport infrastructure that are being put in place throughout the Mekong subregion. They expressed strong support to the finalization and implementation of the Agreement and its annexes and protocols, underscoring their desire to have all the annexes and protocols finalized and signed by 2005 as mandated by the GMS Ministers. The Vice/Deputy Ministers emphasized the important role of the Joint Committee and its subcommittees in promoting and accelerating the process of cross-border transport facilitation in the GMS.

9. The statements of the Vice/Deputy Ministers of Transport of the GMS countries are attached as Appendix 4.

IV. Establishment of Institutional Arrangements for the GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement

10. H.E. Tram Iv Tek, Secretary of State (Vice Minister), MPWT, and Chairperson of the Meeting declared the entry into force of the GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement on behalf of the Joint Committee. The entry into force of the Agreement became effective following its ratification by the six GMS countries, which was completed in December 2003.

11. With the Cross-Border Transport Agreement entered into force, in accordance with Part VIII of the Agreement, an institutional framework for the Agreement is to be established. The National Transport Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) have already been put in place in the six GMS countries, in accordance with Article 28 of the Agreement. In accordance with Article 29 of the Agreement, a Joint Committee consisting of the heads of the NTFCs is to be established. For this purpose, the NTFC officials of the GMS countries, with the assistance of ADB, have formulated the terms of reference of the Joint Committee. In addition, the NTFC officials have also agreed to establish subcommittees in transport, customs, health inspection and immigration. The Meeting agreed to the suggestion of Cambodia to modify Article 5 of the Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee as follows, “The Joint Committee will be composed of Chairpersons of the six National Transport

Facilitation Committees...” The Meeting endorsed the terms of reference of the Joint Committee and its subcommittees, as amended, which are attached as Appendix 5.

V. Other Matters

12. The Meeting noted the recent signing of the Inter-Governmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network Project (Asian Highway Agreement), and the important role and contribution of the GMS cooperation in transport and transport facilitation to the realization of the Asian Highway Agreement.

13. The Meeting requested the PRC, and PRC agreed, to host the Second Meeting of the Joint Committee in 2005.

VI. Adoption of Summary of Proceedings

14. The Report of the Meeting was adopted *ad referendum*.

VII. Acknowledgements

15. The GMS countries and the ADB expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation to the Royal Government of Cambodia, in particular, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements provided to the Inception Meeting of the Joint Committee of the GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement.
